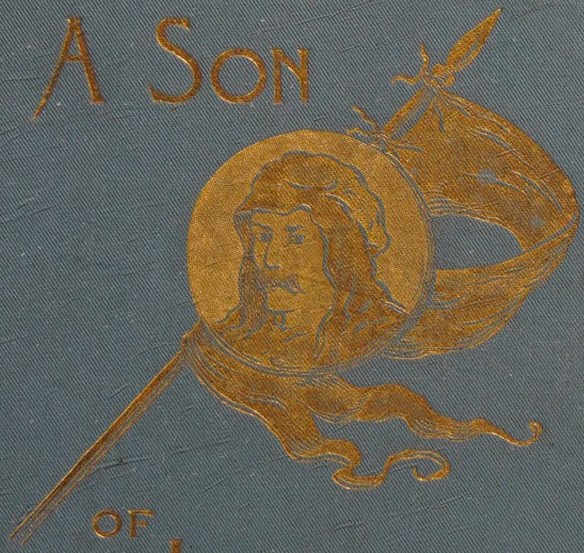
A Son of Issachar



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A SON OF ISSACHAR

A ROMANCE OF THE DAYS OF MESSIAS

BY

ELBRIDGE S. BROOKS

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TO MY WIFE

WHOSE LOVE HAS NEEDED NO SPUR

WHOSE LOYALTY NO INCENTIVE

THIS BOOK IS LOYALLY AND LOVINGLY DEDICATED

PREFACE.

THE study of a wayward soul is ever one of interest. To be a partisan to-day, to be a doubter to-morrow has been the life-story of many a follower of the truth. Our conception of the ideal differs with dispositions; our attachment to that ideal is largely a matter of surroundings or of circumstance.

The man who is touched by a great purpose may never understand the depth of that purpose until tried as by fire; and he who would stand the test of faith must be an unhesitating believer or his courage ends in cowardice. Even he whom a Christ recalls to life may, through lack of understanding, prove recreant to the Divine Impulse that has reawakened him; even he whom Messias raised from the dead may have been the loudest in all the rabble to cry: Crucify, crucify! Only through bitter experience is the light reached at last. The path to faith is often over the thorny ways of renunciation.

To those who muse over the marvellous story of that greatest of all gifts to the world—the Word made flesh,—who would know what was the immediate effect of his mission upon those among whom he walked and labored, this story of a brave yet uncertain, a desiring yet wavering soul is presented as one of the possibilities of a time that was filled with uncertainties, and of a

people as unready to accept as they were unfitted to comprehend the Divine opportunity proffered them.

As to the rest,—the experience of those hours of absence from life,—we can only say with the poet :

> " Behold a man raised up by Christ !
> The rest remaineth unrevealed ;
> He told it not ; or something sealed
> The lips of that Evangelist."

The story of perfect heroism and the divinest self-denial, that we read with nineteen centuries of slowly growing faith as its interpreter, was not to be so read by those not yet schooled in its translation. And to how many, even in this era of the world's progress made possible by that Divine Life, would the presence of an opportunity as great be accepted as the world's regenerator ? Only by love is love eternal comprehended.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PROEM.—In the Tents of Isra-el	1
I.—By the Wells of Harod	6
II.—Who Stops the Way?	14
III.—The Heel of Rome	23
IV.—A Prince for a Day	32
V.—The Pleasure of Herod	39
VI.—At the Gate of Nain	47
VII.—As One Awakened	54
VIII.—Amina the Princess	60
IX.—In the Sheep-Gate	68
X.—Magalath the Magian	76
XI.—The Mystic Scroll	84
XII.—"Believest Thou This?"	91
XIII.—Below the Camel's Hump	98
XIV.—The Rendezvous of the Knifemen	104
XV.—The Daughter of Jairus	115
XVI.—Vettius Once More	123
XVII.—"Choose Ye"	130

PAGE

XVIII.—Bar-Asha's Duty 137

XIX.—In the House of the Centurion . . . 145

XX.—A Life for a Life 153

XXI.—To the Lions 159

XXII.—In Hiding 168

XXIII.—The Power of Love 177

XXIV.—The Spell of Beauty 185

XXV.—The Counsel of a King 191

XXVI.—The Treasure-Hunt on Gerizim . . . 200

XXVII.—"I Am He" 208

XXVIII.—For Israel 216

XXIX.—The Knifeman's Resolve 223

XXX.—The Test of Power 231

XXXI.—Nemesis 241

XXXII.—"Behold your King!" 249

XXXIII.—And After—What? 256

XXXIV.—The Pity of Woman 266

XXXV.—"His Eyes Were Opened" 275

EPILOGUE.—Into His Inheritance 284

A SON OF ISSACHAR.

A ROMANCE OF THE DAYS OF MESSIAS.

PROEM.

IN THE TENTS OF ISRA-EL.

NIGHT fell upon Egypt. From the pillared temple of Amen-ra northward to the Shepherd-hold of Avaris and the Great Sea the fetters of sleep held all the sons of Kem. Fowler and pharaoh, noble and serf alike yielded to the mysterious spell, and over all the land labor halted while men gave themselves into the sovereign keeping of the Universal Mother—Isis-athor, goddess of the night.

In a broad and breezy tent of camel's hair, within the bounds of Goshen, on the eastward borders of the land of Kem—through which, in these later days, the Suez Canal floats the commerce of the world,—an aged man lay dying. He was an old, old man—the patriarch of an alien people, the head of a pastoral clan. Around his scattered tents, thronged with the swarthy children of a nomad race, stretched the green pasture-lands of that North-Egyptian valley, dotted with flocks and herds.

Thirty miles to the southward flashed the sunlit waters of the Egyptian Sea ; to the westward, only a few leagues away, rose the massive walls and frowning watch-towers of Avaris, the mighty stronghold of the Shepherd kings. And it was by the favor and invitation of the last of these Shepherds—Apophis, pharaoh of the Upper Land and sovereign lord of Zoan, himself an alien and the son of aliens—that, throughout the fair land of Goshen, spread now the tents, the flocks and herds of this old, old man—Jacob the Hebrew, called by his clan, Isra-el, "The Directed of the Lord."

He raises himself upon his couch, a noble and notable figure, gentle of aspect, but of the true Semitic cast. His long beard falls in snowy waves upon his breast ; from beneath his shaggy brows peer out the eyes of age, dimmed indeed by the cares of seven-score years of life, but eager, expectant, searching.

Through the gloom of the night come sounds as of one who draws near in haste, the rumble of chariot wheels, the hoofs of galloping horses. The glimmer of distant lights grows into the flare of hurrying torches, and on the still night air are borne the far-off cries of hail and challenge, of reply and query.

An outer watcher enters the open tent : "Behold ! thy son, Joseph, cometh unto thee," he announces, and the eager old man sinks back with a sigh of content. Then, strengthening himself, he lifts his stiffening limbs and sits, upright and imposing, on his lowly bed.

"Bow the knee ! " Through the gloom sounds nearer and yet nearer the cry commanded of the pharaoh to herald the approach of him who is second only to his lord the king. Then runners and torch-bearers, chariots

and horsemen dash through the parting crowd of Hebrew herdsmen gathered about the tent of their dying patriarch and come to a sudden halt before its open folds.

A commanding figure springs from the royal chariot. Robed in a white, transparent linen of the finest texture, his long hair surmounted by the princely cap, and his short beard and side-lock curiously plaited, shod with sandals, his arms ringed with broad bracelets, his girdle richly ornamented, and about his neck the deep golden necklace that betokens the royal favorite, he stands an instant on the threshold of his father's tent while all men bow before him—Zaphnath-paaneah, the prime-minister of Apophis, pharaoh of the Upper Land, but known only to that eager old father as Joseph, the son of his old age, the best beloved of all his house.

The minister of the pharaoh changes to the loving son. With hasty step he enters the tent and kneels beside the bed.

"My father, is it well with thee?" he says.

"It is well with me since thou art here, my son," the old man replies. "But who are these?"

And Joseph said unto his father: "These are my two sons, whom the Lord hath given me. Wilt thou not bless them, my father?"

And Isra-el stretched forth his hands and blessed the lads.

* * * * * *

Then said the patriarch:

"Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you
That which shall befall you in the last days.
Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob;
And hearken unto Isra-el, your father."

It is a dramatic scene. The flaring torches of the Egyptian light-bearers throw into sharp but shifting relief the group about the patriarch's bed. Representatives of every type of that peculiar Oriental people known as Hebrews, strongly Semitic in face and characteristics, swart and brawny in complexion and mould from their out-door life as herdsmen on Syrian plains and in Egyptian valleys, these twelve leaders of the Beni-Israel gathered about their dying father's couch, come forward, one by one, and kneel for his final blessing. It is a foretoken of the future.

And the patriarch who, with outstretched hands, sits thus chanting this prophecy of mingled strength and sadness, of prosperity and craft, of glory and decline, how notable a figure is his. Strengthened on the very threshold of death by the excitement of the moment and the gravity of his act, he rises majestic, ennobled, inspired —a sovereign and a seer, throned on the bed of death. Behind him lie a century and a half of checkered and nomadic life. Gone now are all the memories of a career of craft and deceit, of envy and disobedience, of struggle with self and conquest over it; gone is the remembrance of a youth of sorrow and a manhood of care. Jacob the "Supplanter" is become Isra-el the "Directed of God."

The hushed but curious throng without hear the words of blessing and of prophecy. They hear but may not understand those utterances that drop above the bowed head of the strong man, the "lion's whelp":

> "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
> Nor á lawgiver from between his feet,
> Until Shiloh come;
> And unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

They hear but may not understand, as now another

kneeling figure, another bended head, awaits the patriarchal prophecy. It is a strong and stalwart figure, a drooping, yielding head, a face upon which duty and desire seem ever at odds. His might have been the changeful nature that, all hot to fling his younger brother into that pit in Shechem, was, thereafter, most hasty to lift him out and share the Midianitish silver. A yielding, wayward, slothful, easy nature, quick to accept, slow to resent, ready to change as will commands or circumstance may sway. And what says the seer, as with age-dimmed eyes peering through the veil of years he reads the future of this, his fifth-born son—a family head, a leader among the Beni-Israel?

> "Issachar is a strong ass
> Couching down between two burdens:
> And he saw that rest was good,
> And the land that it was pleasant;
> And bowed his shoulder to bear,
> And became a servant unto tribute."

* * * * * *

One by one have the blessings and the prophecies been said. One by one from beneath those outstretched hands have arisen the kneeling figures and the bending forms. The last dying charge is given; the last fatherly plea is made: "I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, in the land of Canaan—for there I buried Leah!" His last thought is of the deserted wife, the woman he had ill-treated and forsaken, the unfortunate mother of Issachar.

And then—"when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." The patriarch of the Beni-Israel was dead.

CHAPTER I.

BY THE WELLS OF HAROD.

WHOSOEVER shall, in journeying from Galilee into Judea, have traversed the ragged way that leads across the storied plain of Esdraelon and winds about the foot of the limestone heights mistakenly called Little Hermon, must have seen at the western base of the hill a pile of stones overlooking certain oozing springs and wells of cool water, most acceptable to one grown hot and thirsty in threading the dusty road.

These scattered stones, lying about in almost shapeless ruin, are but the crumbling remnants of a once famous stronghold—the castle of Faba, a Christian fortress of the old crusading days. But the springs and wells that the ruins overlook antedate the days of Red Cross banner and of Christian knight. Here, three thousand years ago, rested the army of Gideon that day he overthrew the Midianites; and through the long centuries since they have ever been a blessing by the way—as acceptable to Jewish traveller, to Roman spearman, and to Syrian merchant as to the mail-clad Templar and the turbaned Saracen, the roving Bedawin or the American tourist of yet later days.

And here, by these very fountains—the historic Wells of Harod, solidly coped and much more neatly kept than

in these days of desolation—there sat, one fair spring morning in the year of Rome 779, a stalwart and sturdy-looking young camel-driver. Evidently an Israelite, as face, manner, and dress alike betokened, he was yet following a calling that seemed at variance with the traditions of his race, for but few camel-drivers were of the chosen people of Israel. Indeed, his own contempt of his occupation, displayed itself in the expression that pervaded his face, and in the dissatisfied posture of his body as, half listless, half defiant, he dabbled his hand in the cooling waters, while his sullen camels stretched their ungainly lengths across the pavement of black basalt that surrounded the wayside wells. Face and posture alike but shadowed the truth. Cheliel Bar-Asha was a dissatisfied man.

"Is it permitted one to drink of the Wells of Harod, O friend, or have your camels and yourself the permit from the false Idumean to thus possess the way?"

The query came as much in mocking as in anger, and Bar-Asha glanced sulkily up into the speaker's face with words of hot resentment springing to his lips. But a glance at the stranger stayed his angry answer. A strong, dark man, whose swarthy features spoke of intensity of purpose and unwillingness to tolerate opposition, this was scarcely a person to trifle with in days when robbers infested every road and murder ran unchecked on every highway. Bar-Asha deemed discretion the better part of valor and answered advisedly.

"There is room to approach, O friend," he said. "The camels are somewhat wearied, and I, too, am spent; but we would not seek to fill all the space about the fountains —and, are there not others too?"

"It may be," the stranger made answer; "but I have made a vow to drink only from the one into which your hand is dropped. Truly, I trust the waters may not need purifying. You do seem to be neither Gentile spoiler nor Samaritan dog, but one of our own people rather. And yet—you drive the camels!"

"One may not choose his calling as he doth desire in these times, brother," replied Bar-Asha; "for though my trade be that of the potter what reward is there when our Gentile over-lords do fill the land with their finer vessels from beyond the Great Sea? I took these two camels of Hamet, the Syrian driver of Nain, on a venture of mine own to Scythopolis—town of the accursed! It was but a profitless one, withal. The markets of the Gentile city had been fully stocked by others who were before me and my burden of artichokes and cucumbers, cauliflowers and leeks must needs go for near to nothing or perish on my hands."

"From Nain, said you?"—this with an increase of interest; "then should you be of worthy stock. There are but few of the strangers in that gracious hill-town. Your name, friend?"

"Cheliel Bar-Asha, of the Potters' Street in Nain."

"Cheliel—'the son of a crown'? And Bar-Asha, too? A good name, truly, and one scarce fitted for a driver of camels. Say I not rightly?"

The younger man looked up with something even of interest and pride upon his face.

"You do, in truth," he said. "It is a name not unknown in the annals of our land. My fathers were princes of Issachar and kings in Israel in the better days."

"Ay, you have said it; they were the better days," the stranger exclaimed with emphasis. "The days, when Israel was her own ruler; when neither Gentile cæsar nor Idumean fox dared presume to be her master or her lord."

But Bar-Asha had dropped again into his listless attitude. "Softly, friend," he said; "the Wells of Harod may themselves have ears, and I would not willingly be haled to the cells of Tiberias nor to the deeper dungeons of the Black Machærus for treasonable speech or communication."

"The son of Asha has not the temper of his fathers," the stranger replied with bitter meaning. "They, surely, did not seek to muffle speech or swallow their own hearts in the noble days."

"But these are not the noble days, O friend; and if I dare to speak my thoughts and die the death, who is to drive my camels or find my mother bread?"

"A craven reason, brother," broke out the stranger, impatiently. "The old curse of our father Jacob is upon every son of Issachar to-day. Truly do you see that rest is good and that your land is pleasant. Even as he did prophesy of your people, you do but bow your shoulder to bear and become a servant unto tribute. When, ay, when will the children of Israel rise in their might and cast off the tyrant's yoke?"

Bar-Asha gave a short and careless laugh. "When? Why, when Messias cometh, perhaps. And not till then."

"Ay, brother," and a heavy hand was laid upon the young man's shoulder; "but Messias has come! He has come and ye know him not!"

"Come? So! Who is he, then, and where?" And

Bar-Asha's look was not so much of wonder as of querulous impatience. "Is it Simon the Shepherd, perhaps, come to life once more to get another two thousand of us crucified on Roman crosses? Or is it Jona Bar-Juda, son of his robber father, who, men say, is waiting yonder in the Galilean hills for his day of vengeance? It is but a poor year that brings us not a fresh Messias to stir us up into hoping—and make us food for Cæsar's whips and spears. Who is your new Messias, friend?"

"Listen, boy"; and the stranger flung himself down beside the well and brought his lips near to Bar-Asha's ear. "You come of valiant stock. If I do recall the story aright it was Asha, son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar—your ancestor, boy—who, when Nadab, the king's son, was besieging the Philistines in Dan, did himself strike down the craven king and mount the throne of Israel. You, truly, of the blood of the heroes, should hate the tyrant. Again, listen! I speak truth. The Messias has come. But not as our fathers prophesied; not as we have looked for him. He has come—why, I know not—as teacher, as talker, as a doer of deeds of healing and not of heroism. But he has the power, none the less, to bruise the heel of Rome. I have seen it; I have felt it; I saw him turn into wine the water at a marriage feast beyond in Cana. I saw him heal a leper—an eyeless, noseless leper, boy, do you hear?—with but a single word; I have seen deeds performed by him that not Father Abraham himself nor all the patriarchs could ever do. Such power is heaven-sent; it is godlike; such only can be that of Messias. And he who can do these wonders—will he stop at simple man-healing? Will he not likewise make our nation whole and strong once more?

I know it; I feel it. He is but here to-day, watching, waiting, biding his time. And that time will come! It will come and Israel will be free. Free! And where then will stand those of princely lineage who have gathered round their king? Prince of Issachar! 'T is a noble title, boy, and hath a right royal sound! Son of Asha, do you see what may be in store for you—a youth of valor and of strength for all your muffled speech? Brave deeds are waiting, ready for those who will but dare. Look at me. Do I seem one who would follow a simple teacher of wise sayings, a simple healer of sick-smitten folk? Beneath the teacher I see the leader; beneath the healer I see the king. Whatever he may be now he has work in readiness for such as you and I. Spears will glisten; swords will clash. The Gentile will fall. And I am no rabbi. Hearken! bend lower. I am of the Gaulonites. I am Juda Bar-Simon—a Zealot! a Ḳnifeman!"

Bar-Asha, whom the talk of princely power had drawn closer to the stranger now as quickly moved away, uneasy in his proximity to one who so openly proclaimed himself bandit and rebel. For the Zealots, or *Sicarri* ("men of the knife"), though a band of fanatical patriots, were classed by the Romans under the one general name of "Robbers." But his interest did not abate.

"And who is your Messias, then?" he asked. "Is he, too, Gaulonite and knifeman? Methinks such a rabbi were best cautioned to hide himself, or that heel of Rome that he has come to bruise will crush him ere he has a chance to bite. Who is he? Whence comes he?"

"Men call him the Rabbi Jeshua," replied Bar-Simon. "He comes from the hill country yonder, from Nazareth."

Bar-Asha laughed the laugh of unbelief and scorn. "A Netser!" he cried. "No, no, friend; Messias comes not from among those stupid hill-folk. That were indeed a miracle. Why, what good thing can come out of Nazareth?"

"A liberator can come from there—a leader. I tell you, boy, he has come. See! I am a Jew. I am of Kerioth. I am a hater of the Gentile robber beyond the sea who enslaves us, and the Idumean fox of Tiberias who keeps us under the heavy heel of Rome. Would I trust a Galilean, would I join myself to a Netser, were he rabbi or rabboni, if I did not see in him an instrument of vengeance? It is because I see what waits for us in the future that I am of his following. And you, too, brother, shall see great things if you will but join and labor with us. His is the teacher's mission now. In time it shall be the saviour's—the king's! And we who share his trials shall doubly share his honors. This I have heard him promise. Be then a prince in Israel. Come; join us. We need such sturdy lads, such sons of the old and valiant stock as you."

No sign of assent or disapproval came from Bar-Asha. "The day is speeding," he said. "I should have been in Nain ere this but for your talk of messias and of kings. Will you go forward with me? My mother's house shall be yours this night."

"My way lies not thitherward to-day," replied the knifeman. "I am for the holy city. There have I work to do for the cause. Thereafter shall I join the Rabbi Jeshua. Our faces will soon look toward Galilee and—who knoweth—you may yet see before many days the master himself. You may yet see, perchance, some of

his mighty works. Until that day shall come, think well on what I have disclosed to you. Camel-driver and leek-seller no longer, your day of power may dawn at last. For he, even he, is to be Messias ; he is to be our saviour, the spoiler of the Gentiles, the deliverer of Israel. Son of Asha, remember your name ; remember the ancient valor of your fathers ! Be, as were they, heroic, anointed. Be you, Cheliel, 'son of a crown,' a prince in the land once more ! "

But even as he ended, this camel-driver who should be a prince had urged his ungainly charges to their feet. "*Tchk !*" he cried to them. "*Shalom !*" he nodded to his companion of the hour. Then, following after his shuffling camels, he left the wells behind him and headed toward his home village to the north of the limestone hills.

But Juda Bar-Simon still stood by the Wells of Harod and followed with inquiring eyes the vanishing form of the young man of Nain.

"The seed has fallen," he said at last. "It must—it shall take root. Time ; time and patience, son of Simon! The future is certain to bring us victory, and such as he may help us on the way."

Then he, too, turned from the wells and strode off to the southward.

CHAPTER II.

WHO STOPS THE WAY?

With grunt and slouch the two camels shambled along the basalt-paved causeway, which, circling the hill of Moreh, swung round to Nain and Endor, and then wound northward to Tiberias and the Galilee hills. To those solemn and sulky beasts of burden it mattered little who was lord in the promised land, or whether the Messias had indeed appeared. From earliest ages, come Canaanite or Midianite, come Hebrew, Syrian, or Roman, the master had ever been the master still, and work was always the same wearying, load-carrying drudge, whosoever sat in the land as ruler and as lord.

But, behind them, their driver and their master strode —a pondering, wavering man. Indifferent as he seemed, the words of Juda Bar-Simon had pierced clear through his listlessness and unconcern. Did the man speak truth? Was there a ray of hope? Could it be possible that this hard, never-ending grind for an every-day existence might really be changed for something worth the living? He was a prince—by ancestry and by right a prince in Israel. What matter that for ages his house had been in shadow; that all his days his mother had been but a drudge, and he but a camel-driver—a seller of leeks and cucumbers? Many another of the great houses

of Israel had fallen to the dust. Many another prince of the land was but little better than a slave.

And this Messias! Could it be as the stranger by the Wells of Harod had said—was the hour of Israel's deliverance at hand? They had waited for it long. This, too, might be but a fresh disappointment. Was it wise to risk a new endeavor where all the rest had failed? Was it not better to quietly accept, questioning nothing, attempting nothing? Rome was all powerful; even a Messias might not succeed. He who casts a spear at the king does but die, himself, upon its point. He that keepeth out of harm's way is surest of his daily bread. Better be a live camel-driver than a dead prince.

So, turning the seed of temptation in his mind, now this way and now that, giving it neither warmth by which to germinate nor even time to die, Cheliel the son of Asha strode along the ancient highway. The full beauty of a Syrian spring was abroad. Above, the sky was clear and blue; below, hill-side and valley, clothed in living green, were brilliant with the wealth of flowers. The air was warm and fragrant. Nowhere in all the world is spring more beautiful than on this same swelling, flower-filled plain of Esdraelon.

The spring is full of hope. It is the season, more than all others, that fosters fancies and makes of the healthy youth an optimist. Bar-Asha threw off his peasant's cloak —the *abba*—and flung it across his arm. It was no longer a garment of coarse cloth, woven of goat's hair; it was the flowing robe of soft raiment that was worn in kings' houses. He pushed back from his forehead his ragged turban; it was a golden crown glittering with priceless gems. The wooden soles bound to his feet with well-

worn leathern straps became luxurious sandals, the latchets of which a servant waited to unloose. Upon his brown finger shone the royal signet-ring; about his neck hung the golden chain of crescent coins, gleaming with jewels of silver and jewels of fine gold. His scrawny camel, housed in gorgeous trappings, bore upon its back a king's daughter as the master's bride.

He trod on air. He was Cheliel, "the son of a crown"! He was Bar-Asha, of the princely house—the house that had won the throne of Israel and done deeds of valor and of might. Room for the Prince of Issachar! Way there for the favored of Messias, King of Israel and lord of the world! Room for Bar-Asha, son of princes and friend of kings!

"Ahead there! Who stops the way?" The cry rang in upon his ears, sharp, stern, and aggressive. It came rather as a challenge than as an awakening, and the young enthusiast, aflame with the spirit of his dream of glory, in royal pride flung his head in air and made thoughtless answer.

"Who but the Prince of Issachar! Who but Bar-Asha, son of kings!"

A burst of contemptuous laughter woke him from his dreaming. Upon his bared shoulder fell the heavy thud of a spear-handle.

"Prince of rags, forsooth; and king of lunatics!" roared his challenger. "Ho, dog of a Jew! get yourself and your beasts from the path of your betters or, by the gods, you shall sting for it."

Bar-Asha looked angrily up. "Who stops the way of a Prince of Issachar?" he demanded, still lost in his foolish dream. "Who dares to strike a son of the Anointed?"

And, as if he were indeed the kingly hero he deemed himself, Bar-Asha put forth all the indignant strength of a healthy and athletic young fellow of the hill-country. Lifting his heavy camel-goad, with a sudden and vicious blow he struck to the earth this dastard who dared to bar his way.

But crown and purple robe, hero's sword and kingly vestments fell all to dust, as looking down upon the man whom he had thus rudely overthrown, and quickly looking up at those who now angrily pressed upon him, Bar-Asha, thoroughly awakened from his dreams, found himself face to face with those furthest from his thoughts —the hated instruments of a hated tyrant, the legionaries of imperial Rome.

A harsh grasp caught him by the throat. Heavy hands pinioned his arm, drawn backward for a second blow, and the prostrate soldier, springing to his feet, drew his sharp-bladed *spatha* to strike his assailant dead. But, as if restrained by a second thought, the angry cursing of the Roman broke into a good-natured laugh as he looked upon the slight but sturdy figure held captive before him.

"By the sword of Cæsar! but the Jew strikes hard and fair," he cried. "Ho, king of camel-drivers, where got you that trick of quarter-staff?

Across the basalt causeway and up its steep incline Bar-Asha caught the gleam of spears, the flash of burnished corselets and of rounded shields. He saw the swaying standards and the surging casques. Far ahead of him stretched, rank upon rank, the line of armored legionaries. He was prisoner in the hands of Rome.

A centurion came clattering forward. "Who stops

the way of the procurator?" he cried. "Ha, dog of a Jew; camel-driving slave! How dare you block the pathway of your betters? Fling the cur aside!"

"Your patience, good captain," came the mocking protest of the soldier who had been struck down. "We are royally blocked. This is no camel-driver; this is a prince in truth; a prince of—Ischius, was it not, my comrades? A prince, good captain! ha, ha, ha! 'T is but another king of all the Jews!"

"What foolery is this?" the centurion demanded.

"Nay, but my captain, so he did protest; did he not, O comrades?"

"Ay, that he did, my captain," laughed another of the spearmen in corroboration. "When Macrinus, here, challenged him in the way, he cried as proudly as you please that he was a prince or king of some one of these barbarian realms. And, faith, he floored Macrinus with a right royal blow because he dared to stop his triumph."

"A prince is he? And struck down a soldier of the emperor? So! he shall be royally attended. Fling the lying dog aside; and you, Macrinus and Bulbus, keep hands on him till the legions pass. Then bring him on with the impedimenta. He shall forward to Jerusalem with us and air his kingly heels in the guard-house until such time as we may devise regal return for his mighty manners. 'T is a rare bit of jesting, but I will use it to give the procurator a laugh. A prince, indeed! A ragged Phraates, perhaps! Ha, ha, ha! In the ranks, there! March!" And pushed rudely aside, Bar-Asha stood a captive while the march swept by.

Rank on rank it passed. Stolid, soldierly, and firm, in close order and with measured tread, the solid phalanx

of Imperial Rome rolled past the captive dreamer. On and on they passed — slinger and bowman, spearman and horseman, and in the mid-ranks, followed by his staff, flanked by his guards, and bestriding a mettlesome steed, there rode the representative of the Cæsars in conquered Palestine—Pontius Pilatus, the procurator.

A typical Roman of the patrician class. Bronzed and sinewy from his life in camps and on the march, his form was stalwart and soldierly; his face wore the look of haughty pride and conscious superiority, mingled with the shade of *ennui* that all rich Romans affected in those changing times when the vast empire was merging its days of simplicity into those of its decay. A not unpleasant face, and yet one that could yield to cupidity or credulity, to sudden passion, or to bitter cruelty, as occasion moved it.

"So, so, my Vettius," cried the procurator, as his eyes fell upon the little group drawn up at the side of the highway, "whom have we here? Whose sheepfold is in danger? What new rioter pushes you thus to apprehend him because of juggling rites or hatred of the shields of Rome?"

"No sheepfold robber this, Excellency," replied Vettius, the centurion. "Here is a high-born vassal of our Cæsar. A Jewish prince, forsooth, who boldly stopped your worship's way and struck down my good Macrinus here with a ready and right royal blow, he says."

"A prince, say you? Your name and title, friend?" This in the *lingua* current then in Palestine, and made up of mingled Greek and Aramaic.

"Bar-Asha is my name. A humble camel-driver, only, from Nain beyond. I did not willingly assault the soldier. I pray you, let me go hence."

"A camel-driver and yet a prince! Royalty in hiding, eh? Here is a strange conjunction. Your story, Macrinus; let me have the full report."

And Macrinus, nothing loth to air himself before the procurator, and full of the humor of the situation, detailed the encounter, letting no part of his story suffer from fear of exaggeration.

"A prince of—how say you? Ischius—Issachar—may the gods confound these barbarian names! Here surely is no matter for us to handle. Rome meddles not with rival princes until they do push too closely upon Rome. This is for Herod's solving. He has already good experience with claimants to his throne. So; Divus, your tablets. Write thus for me to the Antipas. I owe him a fair return for his merry entertainment at Tiberias. I will even send this rival back to him for treatment and for brotherly correction, as prince to prince, on one who dared to strike a soldier of the emperor."

And with one hand resting on his sword-hilt, while with the other he smoothed the neck of his restive Arabian, held by a soldier, Pilatus dictated thus to his secretary:

"*Pontius Pilatus to Herodas Antipas in Tiberias—Greeting:*

"Know, O Prince, that I send you with this writing, in charge of my centurion, Vettius Paullus, a treasure—a rival. Yet in disguise, as his robes of state should testify. To one he declareth that he is a prince of one of your dominions with the barbarous names—Issachar. And yet, being pressed, he asserteth that he is but a camel-driver of Nain, hard by. Such puzzles in royalty are not for me to solve. For the sport you gave to me in your circus at Tiberias I make you royal return. Perchance this prince may prove even rarer pleasure. I know your genius in devising clever conceits. He is a

prince, he sayeth. He hath struck down a soldier of the emperor. Let him have a royal welcome and such attention as I do know the blood of the Herods can give to those who covet their kingly throne. Farewell, most noble Tetrarch. I leave your rival in your kindly care."

The writing was finished. "So, my Vettius! Take with you a dozen men. Deliver your prisoner, with this writing and the procurator's compliments, to the Tetrarch Herod at Tiberias. Fair prince of—what 's its name?—I give you good speed and a pleasant reception. Doubt not that you shall receive it. Herod is full of surprises."

All the coward in Bar-Asha's nature rose to the surface—that fear of consequences that lives in the souls of those who "bow the neck to tribute."

"O most noble Roman," he cried imploringly, "hear me. I did mean no harm. I but spoke in jest. No prince am I. I am but, as I did say, a poor camel-driver of Nain, the only stay of my mother—and she a widow. Bid these to unloose me and let me hence. I will work for you; I will slave for you. I will—yes—I will give you great news of a conspiracy afloat here in Israel; one that doth threaten even your Cæsar himself. Only let me go."

"News, say you? Pshaw! That is no news which is but each day's doings. Four watches to a day and forty conspiracies to each watch, too, in this accursed land. No, you shall to Herod. He will be both camel and mother to you—you will want none else when he shall have done with you. Vettius, good speed. My prince, ha-ha, farewell! Before, there; forward! We have waited long."

The cohorts fell away with measured tread. The surging standards and the burnished casques caught once again the glances of the bright spring sun. The procurator of Judea, surrounded by his legionaries, glittered away in the distance. Only the centurion and his dozen spearmen, turning in their tracks, faced toward the north. The stout thongs that were to bind the prisoner were drawn from the belt of Macrinus, the spearman.

And then all the fear and passion in the captive lad rose to a desperate resolve. Quick as a flash he flung himself loose from his captors and dashed up the road toward Nain. The centurion spurred after him. "So; traitorous dog!" he grumbled; "he would give us the slip, would he? A race; a race. Run him to earth, my braves, while I do head him off!"

The horseman is almost upon him! Now they are neck and neck! Vettius stoops to grasp the runaway; when, with an agile turn, the lad darts right under the belly of the plunging horse. The frightened steed, rearing in terror, stumbles and falls; the rider rolls in the dust.

But the reckless fugitive, snatching from the wall that flanked the causeway a great stone, held it aloft. He turned at bay. Planting a foot upon the neck of the prostrate Roman he flashed defiance at the panting pursuers who hastened to surround him.

"Back, back!" he shouted, poising the stone in air; "back, or he shall die for it! One step nearer and, by the God of Israel! I dash this rock upon your leader's head."

CHAPTER III.

THE HEEL OF ROME.

FRONTING the deadly semicircle of lowered spears Bar-Asha stood defiant. The prostrate captain with a hasty glance took in the situation.

"By the geese of the Capitol!" he cried, "but he hath me on the hip. 'T is a right valiant robber. Up spears!" he commanded. And the lowered *hastæ* of the guards were shifted to their owners' shoulders. "Let me but arise, O youth, and you shall go. We did but jest with you."

Bar-Asha took his foot from off the Roman's neck. He dropped the great stone to the ground and turned to go. But, even as he did so, at a sign from the now released leader two of the spearmen sprang upon him, and in an instant he was firmly bound. Rome reckoned nothing of broken faith.

"All is fair in war, my ragged prince," laughed the captain. "Bring him on, Macrinus. You and I are not safe while such a Hercules doth go unbound. Twice now, to-day, hath he overcome a soldier of the emperor. Herod must surely pay us royally for delivering into his hands so stout and strong a rival to his crown. Faith! I did deem myself no better than a vanquished *mirmillo* and was about to fling aloft my fingers for mercy, but

that I could see no women in the boxes hereabout. Silence, dog ! no whimpering," as the captive was about to raise his voice in protest at this act of perfidy. " No whimpering, or we set the gag. Rome keeps no promises with such as you. In order ; march ! "

So, securely bound and tied to the sword-belt of the stoutest of the legionaries, Cheliel, the son of Asha, dejected and forlorn, walked on amid his captors. His borrowed camels, unguided and unwatched, had wandered out of sight. The bright dreams of the morning had given place to hideous reality. The sun beat down in pitiless ferocity upon his now uncovered head. The thongs that bound and fettered him were not more cutting than were the fears that pierced his heart. The day that had opened so full of promise was now merciless and cruel.

What was to be his fate ? His mind was fertile in terrible conjectures, born of the stories that were current throughout all Palestine of the cunning and the cruelty of that pagan son of Edom, that tyrant in a race of tyrants, Herod Antipas the tetrarch. What was to be his fate and what—ah, what—his mother's, left now without support or stay ? Curses on the lying stranger who, with those promises of triumph, had held him that morning by the Wells of Harod. Curses, even, he had almost thought, upon the God of his fathers, who could thus desert, in the hour of need, one of his chosen people, a son of Israel.

The march to fate went on. Along the northern base of the hill of Moreh, bright with its twinkling flowers—the daisies and the amaryllis, the " white star of Bethlehem," the tulip and the poppy and the blood-red drops of the

anemone. Even their beauty seemed to mock the tortured captive, and he kicked at them so viciously as they straggled down to the highway and nodded their good-day to him, that the stolid soldier to whose sword-belt he was tied brought him up roundly with a sudden jerk and a hearty Roman curse as if he feared a new attempt at flight.

Still on they pressed, along the base of the flower-spangled hill until, to the right and at the end of the by-road that led up to its one narrow gate, he saw the walls and house-tops of his own home-town of Nain. Was he to pass the dear little place unnoticed? Was there to be no chance of one word of explanation, one last message of farewell?

Those whom the little band of soldiers had passed upon the way had only a curious glance for the captive, nothing more. It was no unusual sight in those uncertain times to see a fellow-countryman bound and a prisoner in the hands of the Roman soldiers. Such were going continually to the prisons of the Antipas at Tiberias. Such filled the cells of the Antonia at Jerusalem and the horrid dungeons of the "black fortress" of Machærus, near to the grim Salt Sea. Even at the time of Bar-Asha's troubles the rising of those who had rebelled at Pilate's refusal to remove the "images" from Jerusalem still echoed through the air in sullen murmurs and in frequent arrests.

But the straying camels had preceded Bar-Asha on to Nain. Making for their home-shelter they had shuffled through the one gateway of the little hill-town, on past the house of Miriam, the widow of Tola Bar-Asha, on the Street of the Potters, and still on to the stables of

Hamet the Syrian. But no driver came with them. Where then was Cheliel? Where was the son of the Widow Miriam?

And while Hamet the Syrian stormed at this neglect of his beasts, and while the widowed mother, full of anxious fears, wondered at the absence of her boy, behold, one came running in haste down the Potters' Street, to where, by the side of the grumbling Hamet, stood Miriam, the widow of Tola.

"Ho, Miriam," he cried, "here is Simon Bar-Sabban on his way to Endor, who sayeth that he hath seen Cheliel, your son, below, in the hands of the Romans—bound and a prisoner!"

"In the hands of the Gentile tyrants! My son?" the mother shrieked. "Why, what evil hath he done? He never harmed any man. Why should they lay hands on him? Oh, Hamet, cannot you save him?"

"One meddles not with Rome save at his peril and at his cost," the politic Syrian replied. "I dare not try it, Miriam. But, come; let us even go forth and inquire into this matter for ourselves. Perchance they may bring the lad here."

Bad news spreads quickly. Out through the narrow gateway poured men and women, dogs and children, the larger portion of that busy little hill-town.

They went none too soon. For there, below them, along the basalt highway, the sunlight flashing on casques and shields and copper-pointed spears, marched the dozen legionaries, led on by their captain, Vettius the centurion. And there, borne along by his grim guardians, the widow Miriam recognized her son, the excited people their young townsman—Cheliel Bar-Asha, bound and a captive.

"A rescue; a rescue!" some one raised the dangerous cry. "The Gentile robbers would steal the son of Asha! Shall we stand by and see him suffer?"

The lad raised his voice. "Save me, brothers; save me, men of Nain!" he implored. "I am wickedly carried away prisoner to Herod by these Gentile butchers. Mother, O my mother, speak for your son!"

And Miriam, breaking through the excited throng of her townspeople, threw herself before the horse of Vettius the centurion.

"O noble Roman; excellent captain," she cried in a voice full of tears and entreaty; "this is my son, my Cheliel! What evil thing hath he done that you should hold him bound? Release him; loose him, I pray you. He hath never harmed any man."

"Back, woman!" came the stern warning of the centurion as he reined in his horse. "Twice already hath he struck down a soldier of Rome. He claimeth to be a prince of Issachar. Back, on your lives, all!" as the crowd pressed closer about his band. "No rescue! He is forfeit to the emperor."

"Nay, he is no prince, valiant captain," the mother made answer. "He is but my son—mine, the widow of Tola, a poor potter of Nain. He could never say he was aught else. He is as one possessed, or you are juggling with me here. Unloose him, I command!" And springing to her feet, she stretched out her hands toward her own people. "Neighbors; men of Nain," she cried; "this is a Herod trick; this is a Gentile lie! Shall they murder my Cheliel and you stand idly by?"

"Never, never! Down with the robbers! down with the boy-stealers!" and a shower of stones rattled on the uplifted shields of the legionaries.

But Vettius, the centurion, had met such emergencies before. Wheeling his horse, he faced the angry mob. "To your kennels, ye dogs!" he shouted in stern command. "No rescue for a prisoner of the emperor! What! do ye babble yet? Down spears! charge home!"

With a sudden drop, like to the clock-work of some great machine, the dozen spearmen, in a ring about their prisoner, lowered their long *hastæ* for the charge, and, still in perfect step, drove straight at the unruly throng.

It scattered like chaff before the wind. Only the widowed mother, overborne in the rush, struggled to her feet and flung her arms about her boy, dragged ruthlessly along at the sword-belt of his soldier-keeper.

"They shall not separate us, my son," she cried. "See; here is freedom," and quick as thought she flashed before his eyes the knife which, in her haste, as she ran from home, she had caught up from the block of Uri, the flesher. "Run!" And she struck with the glittering blade at the stout thongs that bound her boy.

But, quick as was the desperate mother, the watchful centurion was yet more wary. Leaping from his horse he struck the knife from out the mother's hand.

"Off, woman!" he said. "Here is no affair of yours. Your boy is yours no longer. No man can strike down a soldier of Rome and live. He is held for vengeance. He is forfeit to the emperor. Macrinus, thrust her forth or fling her over the cliff. How now, ye dogs of Jews—ye scum of rebel froth! would you strike at Roman spears? No more of this, or, by the gods! the procurator shall pull down your miserable town over your very ears, till not one stone be left upon another."

Then, as Macrinus flung to the earth the mother of

their captive, Vettius the centurion, sprang to horse. "Close order, my braves," he commanded. "Macrinus, guard you the rear. March!"

The little band of legionaries, flanked by Macrinus and two comrades, who with lowered spears yet faced the hesitating crowd, moved off with rapid steps along the highway that led toward Endor. But the men of Nain had lost courage as they heard the threat of Vettius. Such things had happened before, and they had no desire to risk the destruction of their homes for the life of one young townsman. But even while they wavered, half fearful, half desirous, centurion, guards and prisoners had hurried from the narrow by-road and were well on their way toward the farther slopes of Tabor and the gates of Tiberias. Only a wailing mother mourning a lost son, only a sullen crowd of disputing neighbors remained where the attempt at rescue had failed. The heel of Rome was all too strongly set upon their bended necks.

Over the hills and down into the Jordan Valley, where it trends toward the beautiful Sea of Galilee, the prisoner was hurried on. Along the broadening highway that skirts the white shore of the lake marched guards and captive, until in the distance they saw the walls and towers of Tiberias; they saw the pillars and porticos of Herod's marble palace, flashing white and stately beneath the setting sun.

On through the embattled gate and up the broad palace-bordered avenue they pass; the gate of the palace of the tetrarch opens at their summons, and, thoroughly wearied from their hasty march, they halt at last within the great courtyard of the rambling pile which, half palace, half fortress, Herod the tetrarch had builded

for himself upon the fairest slope that overlooked the lovely Galilean lake.

Beyond the western hills the sun sank lower and lower toward its bed in the Great Sea. Night was falling upon Palestine. And night was falling, too, upon the foot-sore, ragged and disheartened prisoner, who, bound fast through all that weary march, had been hurried along more dead than alive, dragged at the sword-belt of his merciless guardian. The night of sorrow and despair, the blackness of defeat and utter hopelessness was closing over him as, released from the thongs of his keeper, he dropped upon the pitiless pavement, dispirited, dishevelled and forlorn.

Vettius, the centurion, flinging his reins to a waiting attendant, hastened into the quarters of the captain of the tetrarch's guard to deliver his letter and discharge his duties. The soldiers of his slender band fraternized with the soldiers of the garrison. Idumean and Syrian, Greek and Thracian, the paid hirelings of the tetrarch's guard showed no pitying face, no brotherly action to the grief-ridden captive thus brought among them. To the Jews, his countrymen, the pagan palace of Herod was as a place accursed. To the disheartened son of Asha it was but as the glen of Hinnom, a place of abomination, the entrance-way to death. Life for him, he felt, had ended at the gate of Nain. The sooner came axe or cross the better.

A half hour passed. Cruel joke and heartless jibe tossed in brutal fashion at this captive "prince" fell upon him with neither terror nor return. The broken prisoner lay unresponsive where he had first dropped down, prone and motionless upon the courtyard pave.

A page of the palace came hurrying in.

"Which is Macrinus, the spearman of Rome?" he demanded with careless haste.

"That am I," the victim of Cheliel's blow made answer.

"This from the centurion, Vettius," said the page. "You are to deliver your prisoner into the keeping of the tetrarch's guard to be dealt with as this writing bids. Hollo, Jadon! this for you."

And handing a scroll to an officer of the palace who lounged among the throng of attendants, the boy hurried away with not so much as a glance at the prostrate figure of that other lad whose fate he had thus heedlessly delivered.

The officer read the message. "To the tombs, eh? Hobah, Demetrius, rouse up the Jewish dog and follow me."

But before the soldiers indicated could lay hands on their unresisting captive, Macrinus, the spearman, with a cruel kick, awoke the lad from his seeming stupor and dragged him to his feet.

"Come, my prince," he said with a mocking laugh, "Herod calls. He hath granted rare entertainment for you. Who doth not know the beauty of the tomb-dungeons of Tiberias? See; your attendants wait. Most noble! I bend in farewell. May your bath be cooling and your couch be warm. What say you now? Thus doth he fare who dares to stop the way of the soldiers of the emperor. The heel of Rome is heavy and knoweth how to crush."

And, dragged rather than led by those to whom Macrinus had delivered him, the suffering son of Asha went downward to his fate.

CHAPTER IV.

A PRINCE FOR A DAY.

Tiberias, city of shame, home of the Gentile and the apostate and hated of all Judah, built by an Edomite usurper in honor of a pagan emperor, had its foundations amid the sepulchres of the sons of Naphtali. The lowest courses of Herod's marble palace, laid in this old-time graveyard, had dislodged the bones of the dead ; the dungeons, walled up within these foundations, were literally, as they were termed, the place of the tombs.

Above, in all the grace and beauty of the commingled architecture of Greece and Rome, rose the gorgeous palace of Herod the tetrarch ; below, grim, thick-walled and mysterious, were the prison cells, out from which few who went downward into them ever again came forth. The horrible tales of torture and of vengeance wrought upon the unfortunates who, by the orders of the Antipas, were incarcerated in these living tombs, received an additional horror from the very shame of the surroundings ; for upon the pious Jew, no greater indignity could be visited than to be consigned to a dwelling among the tombs. It was in such places dwelt the lunatic, the leper, the outcast, and the accursed.

Dark, damp, and contracted, the cell into which Bar-Asha had been thrown seemed to him in reality his grave.

The last words flung at him by the mocking Macrinus, "May your bath be cooling and your couch be warm," carried with them a presentiment of his fate. A chill fell upon him as, in the encircling gloom, he felt about him to measure the extent of his dungeon. Against its outer walls broke the waters of the Galilean lake. What if, as he had heard it said, the water was allowed to trickle through into that death-trap and slowly, surely drown him? What if, as had been told to him, the floor of his cell should be heated, hotter and yet more hot, till the miserable prisoner, by a refinement of cruelty, found his bath-chamber indeed heated for him before his bath was brought? The threat of Macrinus came back to him now in all the hideousness of truth.

In fancy, through the growing horror of his situation, he could feel the floor beneath him growing warm; in fancy he could hear, without the walls, the cruel lap, lap of the waters, seeking entrance. Imagination emphasizes. Through all the hours of that fearful night he awaited the roasting heat, he listened for the inroad of the merciless water. His brain reeled; his mind seemed becoming unsettled; he raged and wept and called in vain; till, half-crazed and utterly spent with his troubles and his weariness, he sank down upon the floor of his torture-chamber and fell into a heavy sleep.

How long he slept thus he had no means of knowing. When he awoke all about him still was only inky blackness. But above his head he caught the sound of heavy footsteps. They halted at the trap that closed his cell. He was, then, not to be left there to die like a rat in a hole. For him, perhaps, was reserved some other inge-

nuity of torment. At all events, he should once again see the light of day.

Slowly the trap was lifted. A flood of light, as if from flaming torches, streamed across the opening.

"Son of Asha, come forth!" The voice fell upon his startled ears in a strange mingling of command and courtesy. The welcome ladder of exit dropped at his feet.

Change induces hope. Any thing was better than this living tomb. With stiffened limbs, but with the curiosity born of anticipation, Bar-Asha clambered from his cell. Ready hands lifted him to his feet. Before him stood once more the officer Jadon, with torch-bearers and attendants.

"Noble prince," said Jadon, "the tetrarch sends to you his greeting and his plea for pardon. The lying tales of Rome have been confounded. He bids you live and prays you to accept his excuses and his hospitality."

Bar-Asha looked bewildered. Prince to him! Had his reason indeed fled after that night of horror? Had all that day's experience been but a hideous dream? Was the promise by the Wells of Harod to be fulfilled?

Still silent and wondering, he followed his conductor. Up from those dismal prison vaults they passed; and as the glorious light of day fell upon him, Bar-Asha's soul went out, for the first time in all his troubles, to the God of Israel who had delivered him from death. How or why he did not know; he did not seek to question. He was free!

Within a gorgeous chamber, robes and attendants awaited him. Greater luxury than he had ever seen or dreamed of was his to enjoy. Bathed and perfumed,

clothed in rich apparel, the "soft raiment" that, so he knew, was the portion only of those who lived in kings' houses—robed in the white *toga* of the Roman courts rather than in the flowing *malbush* of his own people—shod with soft sandals, his hair bound with the princely fillet, chains about his neck, rings and armlets and the jewels that the lords of the land most affected decorating his person, served with rich viands for his morning meal, waited upon like a king's son—the young camel-driver of Nain lived in a veritable dream.

Again and again was he moved to proclaim his identity, to assure the servants of his royal host that he was indeed no prince—only the poverty-stricken son of the widow Miriam of Nain. But, as often as these intentions moved him, as quickly did he brush them aside. Why should he quarrel with the gifts of fortune? If it was his good luck to be mistaken for a prince, why should he wilfully cast himself once again into outer darkness? What the Lord provideth, that accept unquestioning. Thus he reasoned, and in this spirit he allowed himself to be attended and entertained.

Reclining upon soft cushions, with servants ready at his call, enjoying the very luxury of indolence, thus he lay at peace, save for the ever-present wonderment and the lingering uneasiness that pressed upon him. At last came the very page who, the day before, had presented his death-warrant.

"Herod waits," he announced, with deep obeisance. "Will my lord present himself before the tetrarch?"

Preceded by pages and officials, surrounded by servants and slaves, Bar-Asha walked on through the corridors of that noble palace. The strains of softest music

fell upon his ears. The perfume of many flowers was in the heavy air. All about him were the signs of luxury, royalty, and power. And of this he was a part. A sense of his importance filled him. His bearing became even more erect. His handsome face took on a look of almost conscious pride. He bore his head aloft with princely and right regal poise. He was Cheliel, son of a crown. He was Bar-Asha, of the kingly line, summoned to visit his royal friend, the tetrarch. His friend? No, his equal!

But was the Antipas an equal? These Edomite princes of Palestine were but new royalties. He, Bar-Asha, was of the old, old line. His fathers had been captains, victors, kings, generations before, when the ancestors of this Idumean Herod were but shepherds and robbers on their sterile southern hills. He was by birthright a greater than Herod. He was of the ancient race.

It was thus that Bar-Asha entered the presence of the tetrarch. Herod Antipas, grandson of that Antipater the Idumean who juggled the Romans into granting him a crown, son of that greater Herod whose abilities were only exceeded by his crimes, reclined upon a low, backless *phoreion*, soft with pillows and overspread with tiger skins. A man of forty years or more, he was short and swarthy, of not unpleasant features, though on his face a constant sneer seemed to live; from out his eyes the spirit of craft looked forth. In the main a man of many talents and of much natural ability, politic, shrewd, determined, and ever scheming, he joined to lavish hospitality the dissoluteness of a sensual nature made fascinating by that equally sensual love of art and beauty acquired by long residence at the court of Tiberius the emperor.

And underneath all there lay a slumbering hatred of Rome, that all-devouring power that had denied his aspirations to the kingship of all Palestine and reduced him to the position of a petty provincial ruler. And yet, so politic was this crafty Idumean prince, that when he hated most he seemed to be most friendly and most loyal.

A gentleman without ; a fox—if occasion demanded, a tiger within. Happy the boon companion who could share his pleasures, his frolics, and his feasts ; miserable the wretch who lived to feel his treachery, his anger, and his revenge !

The tetrarch rose from his skin-covered couch with easy grace. A smile played over his swarthy features. "*Shalom !*" he said. "My prince, I salute you. Your rank is stamped upon your brow. The procurator of Judea busies himself too officiously with the lords of Galilee. Let him keep to his own dominion. His over-zeal hath wrought you evil and gained me, I trust, a friend. I know full sadly in how low a state are far too many of our princely lines. A son of the royal house of Asha, though he be of necessity no more than a driver of camels, is no less a prince in the land of Israel. It is for me to befriend and strengthen the old houses. Only thus can I hope to secure the love and support of my countrymen. Only thus—your ear, my prince "—and he spoke almost in whispers—"can I hope to compass the craft and tyranny of Rome. You are my guest. For this day be, as of right you are, a prince in Israel—at home in the palace of the tetrarch."

Bar-Asha was confounded. Was this the terrible Herod ? Was this the crafty Antipas of whom so many lying tales were current ? Why, this was a noble, a

gracious, a princely gentleman. With stammering speech, which he sorely tried to turn into the courtly phrases that were after all but an unknown tongue to him, he accepted the tetrarch's proffered friendship. But all the while his heart was big with pride ; his self-esteem grew to vast proportions.

Ah ! if but his brethren of Nain could see him now ; or Hamet, the grumbling old camel-driver who so grudged the loan of his scurvy beasts. If but the dear mother, whose only stay he was, could look upon her son—Cheliel the prince, Bar-Asha, friend to the tetrarch. She at least should share his triumphs later. When the Antipas had returned him to her loaded with princely gifts, or perhaps invested with some official rank in the section about his home, then indeed should his mother share his glory and his joy.

All this he thought, with much more in the same high strain, while the tetrarch plied him with compliments and honeyed speeches, which he all too clumsily returned. Thus ever blind is pride to subtlety.

"By the fillet of Lyæus, an honest, manly lad ! " said Herod. " You were born for better things than camel-driving. Trust me to find for you a speedier advancement and a more lofty fate. Without there, ho ! Music and dancing for our friend, the prince. A flagon of our best Falernian for our noble guest ! Then for the lake, the circus, and the banquet. This is the prince's day ! "

CHAPTER V.

THE PLEASURE OF HEROD.

An Oriental by birth, a Roman by education, and a Greek by association, Herod Antipas displayed alike in his palace and in his character a compound of diverse and strangely mingled elements. From ponderous foundation stone to sculptured capital his palace was Roman in construction and Greek in decoration and adornment. Jewish belongings, Egyptian furnishings, and Persian hangings contrasted strangely with Roman architecture and Greek decoration. Dancing girls from Cyprus and Antioch, musicians from Athens, actors and improvisators from Rome, and singers from distant Naples, the questionable culture of the West had here joined hands with the sensualism of the East, meeting in a court which, though that of a prince of the Hebrews, had in it men and women of every nationality save that of the land it ruled. The court of Herod Antipas was to the orthodox Jew the home of all abominations.

Throughout the whirl of excitement that, like a dream, passed before the eyes of Bar-Asha in that day of surprises, even his purblind vision could not be entirely dead to this open exception. Jews there were in the palace of the tetrarch, but they were such as were esteemed "worse than infidel" by their countrymen—

renegades, apostates, and time-servers, who for the sake of position and patronage had lapsed from the stricter ways and the stern faith of their fathers to become the associates and advisers of a man whom all their land despised. The real Jew—the patriot, the partisan, the *Jew*—had neither part nor lot in Herod's brilliant court.

Many times that day the prickings of Bar-Asha's conscience were sharp and sore. But each time they grew less and less obtrusive as the surroundings of pleasure and of luxury dulled alike that sense of religious exclusiveness and of national pride, inherent in every Jew. Desire and pleasure, the lust of the eyes, the intoxication of his surroundings, the fascinations of the moment overcame the better promptings of this shifting nature. Before the noon changed to night Bar-Asha, the devout Jew of Nain, dulled by debauchery, sunk in sensualism, poisoned by pleasure, was dead indeed.

The sounds of revelry, of music, and of the dance filled the incense-laden rooms. The galley of the tetrarch, bright with its gorgeous adornings and the light robes of the lighter attendants on a voluptuous ruler, sped over the blue waters of the lovely lake. The riotous banquet, fed by rich viands and hot, imperious liquors, hastened from course to course, while all the accompaniments of such old-time orgies inflamed the baser passions and sunk manliness in shame. And through it all, ever at the ear of the deluded Bar-Asha, lolled the wily Herod, playing a part that to him was but congenial sport.

"To the prince!" he said, and flashing hands flung brimming cups aloft, while shouts of delight greeted the flushed and handsome face of the tetrarch's young guest

as, all unsteadied from the effect of such unwonted indulgence, he raised his goblet in acknowledgment.

And while Herod plied him with praises and with wine, and while before his eyes passed all the languor and the license of a disreputable feast, all the conceit of the boy came to the surface. He met the tetrarch's deftly veiled sarcasms and open adulations with undisguised delight ; he drank eternal confusion to the tyrants of Rome, and communicated to his host in all the exaggeration of an over-heated imagination the promises and confidences of Juda Bar-Simon at the Wells of Harod ; he boasted of the intentions of the new Messias, who had come in the garb of a teacher ; he prated of the future of Israel and the coming greatness of the Jew.

"And when you come into your kingdom will you not remember me, your comrade, your well-wisher and your host?" Herod insinuatingly asked.

"Ay, that will I to the end, good friend," replied the lad. "The princes of Israel will not forget their allies and well-wishers in the hour of triumph. Trust me to say the word of approval for you. Though the best portion of the land must go to the chosen people, there shall be conquered provinces to give into the keeping of such a valiant noble as is the worthy tetrarch of Galilee."

"It was said of Herod, my father, O mighty prince, that his dominions were all too little for the greatness of his soul—that he well deserved to have both all the kingdom of Syria and that of Egypt too. Shall his son deserve less?"

"Less ; nay more, my Herod!" cried the vaunting youth. "Not only all of Egypt but all Arabia shall be

yours. Drink, friends, drink to the new pharaoh of Egypt! Drink to the Antipas, Emperor of the East!"

A shout, as of approval, rang through the banquet hall. Music, shrill and barbaric, clashed forth and goblets gleamed on high. And Herod said: "Thanks, my prince; we shall indeed value the friendship and cherish the regard of our royal patron and friend, Cheliel of the great house of Asha—the king, perchance in some not distant day, of all the high-placed Jews."

"And now a song; a song! Good cheer for our noble guest," the smiling host commanded. And out from the thoughtless laughter and the gleam of golden cups rose the lilt and jingle of a gay drinking chorus:

"Lift the goblet brimming high,
Bubbling, sparkling, dancing.
Pouting lip and flashing eye,
Heaving bosom, tender sigh,
Fade and fly,
Life must die,
Only wine doth never lie—
Wine the all-entrancing:
Drink, then drink!
Cravens shrink,
Bold men falter never.
Strife is vain,
Passion pain,
Wine alone is joy and gain—
Wine is king forever!"

Only once in all these hours of cozening, this time of kingly sporting with a blinded fool, did a word of warning drop into the ear of the victim.

In a pause in the feast, while Herod lay absorbed in a new dance which Cynthia the Cypriote had arranged for

his pleasure, Bar-Asha felt a touch on his arm. Looking quickly around he caught the whisper of the slave, who offered a fresh flagon of wine: "Beware! Herod means your harm. He playeth deftly and he striketh deep."

"Who tells me this?" the lad demanded.

"Amina the Arabian, Herod's wife and queen," came the answer. "She pitieth the fool of Herod, and bids him flee or fall."

Bewildered and dazed at this unexpected drop of bitter in his sweets, Bar-Asha would have questioned further; but with a warning finger on his lip the slave slipped away. A shadow of distrust crossed Bar-Asha's face; but at Herod's fresh cajoleries distrust vanished. With that arrogance of unbelief that he who walks blindly into a trap ever assumes, the young reveller cast the warning aside and filled a fresh goblet of wine to the beauty of Cynthia the Cypriote.

At last the end came. The feast was wild and high. Laughter and song rang through the hall. Bar-Asha, crowned with the chaplet of a conqueror, leaned against the tetrarch's ivory couch. The sparkle of triumph gleamed in his eye. Then Herod, rising from his *phoreion*, lifted his hand for silence.

"The feast grows old," he said. "Our honored guest hath other duties that brook no delay. This great, this noble prince, who dareth boldly to assault the legionaries of Rome, and who, with sovereign power, will of his great mercy in the days to come make us the Emperor of the East, must not be kept by feast or revel from his crown and throne. His ministers await without. One last libation, then; one last farewell to this our noble guest! Fill high your goblets while I as sponsor to this prince in

Israel anoint him king—ay" (and his smooth-tongued phrases changed quickly to a bitter, mocking scorn), "king of fools and prince of imbeciles! *Ave imperator; ungimus te!*" and with a sudden fling he dashed the contents of his brimming cup straight into Bar-Asha's face.

"*Libate te!*" rose the cry; and, as the poor dupe fell backwards, stunned and blinded, from all about the hall the revellers pounced upon him. Drenched with the dregs of their wine cups, bruised and battered by their buffets and their thrusts, torn and dishevelled from their rough and brutal handling, Bar-Asha struggled to his feet. His rude awakening came as a tonic. The stupor of drink was dispelled as by an electric shock. He dashed aside his assailants and once again stood at bay. All the lion within him was roused.

"What then, is it thus you treat a guest?" his voice rang bravely out. "Cowards and liars; Gentile dogs! Would you thus befoul a prince of the land? Am I to be but your sport, your laughter, and your jest? Then shall it cost you dear. So; false usurper, base Idumean fox!" he cried as he caught the mocking face of the tetrarch gloating over the dramatic ending of this day of "sport," "is it thus you set a snare for those who trust to your lying words? Accursed! I defy you! take thus my return for this Herod trick!" and with all the force of a sturdy arm Bar-Asha hurled his empty goblet with unerring aim at the nodding Herod's head.

The tetrarch toppled from his couch, his head stunned and bleeding from the savage blow. A dozen hands sprang to uplift him, while as many more grappled with Bar-Asha, battling for his life. Staggering to his feet, literally foaming with rage, the Antipas raved in un-

checked fury. To the fox succeeded the tiger. All the tyrant blood of the Herods surged into his face.

"Crucify the assassin!" he roared out. "Kill, torture, flay the dog of a Jew! So, villain," as, overborne by numbers, Bar-Asha was dragged panting before him, "would you try your puny strength on princes as well as upon legionaries? Fool and triple fool! Did you think my mummeries were real and true? Did you never hear how I can play and punish? Cur, hound, camel-driving slave, do you brave the power of a prince—and a Herod? By all the gods that ever were templed, I will pay you well for this! Hollo! Jadon! Jadon, I say! Drag me this beggar forth! Strip him, torture him, bury him alive in the tombs! Dash out his—— Ha! a happy thought; he would go to his home a prince, would he? He shall. Serve him as you best know how in Herod's favorite way, and then return him, as you too know how, straight to the door of his mother's hovel on the—where was the dog's kennel?—on the Potters' Street in Nain, with Herod's compliments. Do you hear? With Herod's love and favors! Thrust him forth. So, prince of dogs, farewell. Swine's flesh, to your mire. I have done with you. Hollo, there; a fresh flagon that I may wash the cur's face from my memory."

And as the interrupted revel broke out anew the doomed and disenchanted victim of Herod's royal "sport" went forth into outer darkness.

That very night a band of horsemen clattered up the steep by-road and drew rein before the gate of Nain. "Open, open, in Herod's name!" they demanded, and the sleepy porter, descending from his chamber over the

gate, flung open the portals. Into the little town the horsemen dashed, and the horrified porter caught sight of a battered and bedraggled Something towing and surging at the hoofs of one of those galloping steeds. Into the Potters' Street they rode, and halting, cut away the burden from behind the horse's heels.

Thus, with a severed rope dangling about his neck, disfigured, naked, foul, and torn, and flung across his widowed mother's door, Bar-Asha came to his own again.

And the same dagger that was driven to its hilt in his silent heart pinned to his breast a parchment, on which was scrawled this writing: "*So perish all foes of Rome and the tetrarch. Room for the Prince of Issachar!*" Such were the pleasures of Herod.

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CHAPTER VI.

AT THE GATE OF NAIN.

"*Echah, echah!*" It was the cry of bitter mourning that rang through the streets of Nain. From all the dwellers in that little hill-town went up the wail of grief. The message of the tetrarch had been read in horror. The home-coming of Bar-Asha was the saddest of all sad tragedies. On that gray-walled village fell a sudden fear, a bitter mourning, and a righteous rage.

From home and shop, from house-top, wine-press, tower, and field, came hurrying men and women as the tidings spread. The son of Miriam foully slain? And by the dagger of Herod? With bated breath at first, but soon with rising voices as the story grew, they told of this new pressure of the hated yoke of Rome, this fresh showing of Herod's bloody ways.

And yet, in the very torrent of their wrath, "What can we do?" they moaned. "Not all our burning rage, nor all our desire for vengeance can avail against the arm of power that holds us all in leash." Neither the fierce bigotry of the men of Judah, nor the ready rebellion of the Galilean mountaineers found place among these farmers of the hill-slopes and the green Esdraelon plain. They were of the blood of Issachar; they were of that mid-Palestine folk who had bowed the neck to tribute

and whose hot anger of the moment gave place, all too soon, to a submissive fear of the heavy heel of Rome.

At least they could mourn with those who mourned ; they could weep with those who wept. Neither Roman procurator nor Idumean tyrant could order back their tears. There was a beating of breasts, a tearing of hair and a rending of mantles ; there was a sprinkling of dust and of ashes upon uncovered heads ; there was a donning of sackcloth ; there were loud lamentations and songs of sorrow, and all the extravagant outward signs of grief that mark the Oriental nature.

And within the house of Miriam, the widow of Tola, the body of her murdered son was prepared for burial. In a little upper chamber it lay, the hands and feet swathed in spotless linen, the head bound about with a napkin. From the white grave-clothes went out the scent of myrrh and aloes, while from the little group in that upper chamber arose continually the sad *echah!* of lamentation. But the sorrowing mother, whose only stay had thus been rudely taken, lay prostrate in her tears, like Rachel of old refusing to be comforted.

Out from the house of mourning, as the day waned, passed the funeral procession. Four stalwart young fellows of Nain, comrades and friends of the dead lad, lifted to their shoulders the *mittah* or death couch, formed of freshly gathered palm branches, bent and interlaced, and with projecting poles as handles. Before them walked the wailing women, raising their plaint : "*Ichabod! Ichabod!* the glory is departed ! " And, among the women, her tears all spent, moved the stricken mother, draped in the sackcloth of woe, shrouded with the very eloquence of grief.

Along the Potters' Street the sad procession moved. And "much people of the city" followed after. The carpenter from his bench and the potter from his wheel, the smith from his fire and the mason from his course, the gold-worker from his table, the tent-maker from his needle and the tanner from his skins, the shop-keeper from his stall, the rabbi from his school and the stranger within the gates—for, so the custom ruled, even the stranger and the sojourner were expected by the comradeship of sorrow to join in the procession that bore a fellow-mortal to his "long home,"—all, alike, paid court to death and courtesy to woe. And, behind them all, closing the lengthening line, the shrill, slow measures of their instruments only emphasizing the cries of the women who led the procession forth, came the flute-players with their mournful, quavering strains.

On to the city gate they pass—the ponderous etiquette of Oriental grief. But here is something more than deference to custom ; here is genuine sorrow. Here is no need of hired mourners, of people paid to weep ; here all are mourners. They bemoan a strong young life relentlessly cut off, a widowed mother left to solitude and loneliness, a fellow-countryman foully slain by the usurping tyrants of the land they love, a fearful tragedy that might as easily fall upon any household of their hill-side town.

So on they pass, the mourners and the mourned. Before, the wailing women ; behind, the sorrowing friends ; and between, borne on the shoulders of the strong but silent bearers, the palm-laced *mittah* on which lay the body of the dead, the victim of Herod's treachery and guile. Where now were all the rosy dreams of that cloud-

less spring morning when, by the Wells of Harod, the son of Asha had listened to a glowing prophecy of power? What to him now were pomp or treasure, station or success, the princely glory that was to follow adherence to that new Messias, the triumph of the strong, right arm, the martial gathering, and the royal name? Gone; as dust in the balance; as the pitcher broken at the fountain; all gone! done to cruel death by the iron heel of Rome that ruthlessly stamped out all hope of Israel's greatness; stricken down by the tyrant's treacherous dagger-thrust that had stabbed alike the enthusiast's ambition and his strong young life.

This, then, is the end of all—a great hope shattered, a stout heart stilled, a widowed mother left alone to mourn. And so, toward the narrow caves, hewn in the limestone rocks to the westward of the little town, where for ages have stood the ancient sepulchres of their fathers, out through the open gate the slow procession moves.

Just then, along the broader highway that skirts the foot of Moreh, and leads southward from Tiberias and the Galilean hills, a little company of travellers are walking slowly on. From distant Capernaum into Judea they come, and must needs pass the open gate of Nain. The quavering echoes of the shrill flutes and the shriller sounds of woman's wailing and of mourning songs are borne upon their ears. And now they catch sight of the procession winding down with slow and solemn pace from the gate of Nain to the broader highway. It is for them as strangers to join themselves to the throng of mourners, even to offer their services as bearers, relieving those who carry the bier.

The sorrowing mother has not noted at all these

strangers who approach ; she scarcely sees them as they pause with bended heads awaiting the passing of the funeral train. Her pent-up feelings break out all afresh as now she recognizes that fatal spot where, when last she saw her boy alive, he had pleaded for release from the cruel legionaries of Rome. Why was this young life so soon cut off ? Why were the wicked allowed to triumph, the children of the Lord so wretchedly cast down and slain by the hand of the spoiler ? O Cheliel, my only son ; my son, my son Cheliel ; my comfort, staff and stay, would God I had died for you, O Cheliel, my son, my son ! Why must you be taken ? why must you fall victim to so terrible a stroke of Gentile vengeance ?

Through her grief she hears a tender voice : "Weep not," it says. There is infinite sympathy, infinite compassion in its tone. And even this touch of kindly interest causes her tears to flow afresh. Through their misty veil she looks up at that pitying face. Weep not ? Ah, what can this stranger know of her need, her misery and her loss ? Even his sympathy cannot give her back her dead.

Here, at the crossing of the ways, the strangers stand aside to let the cortege pass. Then, suddenly, as if by a resistless impulse, this slight and travel-stained stranger, whose presence no one has seemed especially to heed steps beside the bearers.

"Set down the *mittah* here," he says.

There is mingled command and compassion in his voice. The bearers, thinking that this young and stranger guest —a rabbi evidently by his dress—is about to offer the services of his companions to take their places for awhile, set down the *mittah* upon almost the very spot

where, two days before, they had rallied to rescue Bar-Asha from the clutches of his captors.

The stranger steps quietly to the side of the bier and looks into the face of the dead. The long procession halts ; the flute-players cease their mournful strains ; the women stay their cries and turn, curious even in their grief, to learn the reason of this sudden halt. But, at the sight of the stricken mother who alone seems not to notice this, though she stands still with the rest, the lamentations rise again, more tearful and more shrill.

"Weep not," again the voice commands. "Whom bear ye here ?"

A dozen voices volunteer replies. Some, in remembrance of the brutal deed, would tell of Roman tyranny and of Herod's crime ; some would give utterance to their own useless wrath and their desire for revenge, but these the stranger hears not ; he seems only to catch the reply that comes to him in the one simple, but touching story : "the only son of his mother and she a widow."

"Pity and need make all flesh kin" ;

the stranger bends above the silent form ; he lays a tender touch upon the marble face.

"Young man, I say unto thee, arise !"

What does this mean ? Why, the man is dead—dead ! Does not this stranger understand ; can he not see for himself ? Would he then make a mockery of grief, a sport of death ? Curiosity is about to give way to anger, inquiry to rage. Such sacrilege and jesting are surely not to be borne. The more impulsive of the encircling friends step quickly forward as if to push away this meddlesome stranger, and punish him well for his ill-

timed trifling with woe ; they are about to speak, when —O wonder of wonders ! miracle of miracles ! what means this marvellous change ? See ; there is a stir upon the bier, a moving of stiffened limbs, a flutter as of breath through the compressed lips, a sudden heaving of the silent breast !

Fearful and wondering, those standing near look on as this coming back from death goes on beneath their very eyes. Over the mother's face hope, incredulity, and love pass in quick succession. A hand slips out from beneath the spotless grave covering ; it draws away the linen compress from the tightly bandaged head ; the lips move ; the eyes open ; and then—God in Israel! can this thing be ? What can this marvel mean ? And then—

He that was dead sat up and began to speak.

"Mother !"

With a wild cry of mingled marvel, love, and praise the mother flung herself across the palm-wreathed bier. "Woman, behold thy son." And, while a great fear fell upon the astonished watchers, along the highway with a tender smile upon his face the stranger with his companions passed on their southward way into Judea, and no man sought to stay them.

But, even as they passed, the eyes of the re-awakened Bar-Asha, glancing curiously around, scarce realizing yet the meaning of this that had happened to him, fell upon the face of one of those who moved in the stranger's company.

It was the face of his companion at the Wells of Harod—Juda Bar-Simon of Kerioth, the knifeman, the Gaulonite.

CHAPTER VII.

AS ONE AWAKENED.

"*MALKA Meshichah!* The king! It is the king Messias!"

With all the intensity of a positive recognition Bar-Asha's voice rang out clear and strong. Pointing with extended hand toward the vanishing figure of the stranger who had brought him back to life, he sprang from the now useless *mittah* and would have followed after his deliverer.

But the loving arms of his mother restrained him. "Go not," she implored; "Oh, go not, my son. Let these hands feel you, these arms enfold you—lest, perchance, I too awaken and find it but a dream."

And the people, still dazed and wondering at the mighty work that had been done among them, lifted their voices in rejoicing and in glory to the Lord of Hosts, who had thus visited so great a blessing upon his chosen people.

"Elisha has come again!" they cried. "A great prophet has risen up among us. Truly, O Miriam, is your household blest. And you, O Nain the fair—dear city of our hearts, upon you the glory of the Lord descends. Surely, God has visited his people!"

But Bar-Asha stood with eyes still turned toward the

south ; still were his hands extended toward that vanishing form. "*Malka Meshichah*," he said again. "It is the king Messias !"

The useless bier was cast aside. The flutes were exchanged for the high-pitched *chalil*, or pipes of brass, for psalteries of fir-wood, for clashing cymbals and for jingling timbrels. With song and dance and expressions of joy as exaggerated as had been those of their mourning, back through the city gate, back to the Potters' Street, back to their houses, their workshops, and their stalls went the people, wondering, discussing, speculating, but certain at least of one thing ; he who was dead was alive again ! Herod's vengeance had miraculously come to naught ; the Lord had wonderfully visited his people. That evening's *Arbith*, or evening service in the synagogue, was overwhelmingly attended ; and Simeon Bar-Azzan, the *darshan*, or preacher for the day, found, with but little difficulty, alike theme for exhortation and people to harangue. "Wherever there is preaching there is a crowd," says the Mishnah, and the evening of that eventful day at Nain did not lack for either.

But Miriam, the widow of Tola, was strangely silent through all these rejoicings. "It is Messias ; it is the Sent of God," she said simply. "Blessed be the God of the widow and the fatherless, who has brought so great a thing to pass."

There was little work that day in Nain ; there was scarcely more the next. Tongues were too busy, thoughts too fully occupied with this nine-days' wonder. The story of the raising of Bar-Asha spread through the country round. Throngs came to see, to question and to hear ; and thrifty old Naham, the sherbet-seller nigh

to the city gate, declared that Bar-Asha's recovery had been a wonderful thing for the town. Even to the palace of Herod the tetrarch, at Tiberias, the rumor of a dead man brought to life travelled with all the exaggerations of an oft-repeated tale, and with all the settings of the fervid Oriental fancy.

And Bar-Asha, what of him? At first, silent, thoughtful, grave, he held a curious reticence concerning this wonderful thing that had happened to his life. Only gradually did the whole truth of the matter dawn upon him. As one awakened from a heavy sleep, he lived still as in a dream for days. Questioned as to his doings and impressions during his hours of death, he had no answer to give. "I cannot say," would be his only reply. And, truth to tell, he could not answer better. The time was to him a blank. From that despairing hour when he had felt about his neck the death-rope of the servants of the tyrant, to that supreme moment when the Master's word awoke him, the space was to him as if it had not been. It was a silent void. He knew nothing of that terrible death-ride, nothing of the dastardly dagger-thrust, nothing of the hours across his mother's door.

But, fully aroused at last, one thing he did know. He was alive once more. Strong, sturdy, and alert, the fresh blood of youth tingling in every vein, he was moving once again among his fellows. The touch of Messias had aroused him, the word of Messias had brought him back to life and action. And for what? That life was his who had given it. To Messias it belonged; for him it should be spent. To Messias therefore would he go.

His mother pleaded in vain. "Messias brought you back to be my strength and stay," she said. "O Cheliel,

it was compassion on the widow of your father Tola, not on you, that touched that pitying heart and made him bring you back. Would he bid you leave me now? Stay here, my son, to labor for me, to be my comfort and support. Go not forth into the world again where death lurks ever and may even now await you."

"My life is his, O mother," said her son; "his, who gave me freedom from the grave. He is Messias. His kingdom is to come. It is for me to work for him, for Israel and the glory of the Lord. The house of Asha shall rise to power once again, such power as in the older days made my fathers kings in the land. My arm is strong, my heart is willing, my duty calls. I must serve the king."

And a new reason came for removal and for change. Crusty old Hamet the Syrian, whom all this singular affair sorely puzzled, added his word of sage advice to the decision born of Bar-Asha's desire.

"Is it wise, O Miriam, for the lad to remain among us? I wager not," he said. "The news of this marvellous thing will fly to Herod's ears. Think you he will have it said that a power mightier than that of Herod and of Rome can overturn his doings and decrees? His spies are legion. Even to-day have I seen, here in our streets of Nain, those whose looks are treacherous, whose speeches I distrust. Let the lad go ere it shall be too late. Shall he, whom you call your Messias and who may have work for your boy to do, find himself thwarted by the guile of Herod and your own selfish fears? Let the lad go; or, mark my words, ere another seven days be spent the son of Asha will again be in the power of the Antipas, and not even your wise Messias himself shall be able to stay

his secret and sudden taking off. Let the lad go, I say, if you would keep him in the land of the living."

Hamet was a man of few words. A speech from him of such unwonted length had its effect quite as much in its manner as its matter, for that must be grave business indeed that drew so much talk from him. His words, therefore, and the entreaties of Bar-Asha won the day. Ruefully, tearfully, the mother bade her boy depart. Once again, out of the gate of Nain, went Bar-Asha. But this time he went forth, with staff and scrip, to seek his fortune and the kingdom that, so he stood assured, was waiting but for his winning.

"My glory will come, O mother; you will see it yet," he cried. "The house of Asha shall again be great in the land, and wealth and power, fame and honor shall be ours as in the olden days. Farewell, till I return to bid you share my honors. I go to seek Messias, my master and my lord."

So forth into the world he went. The daily duties and pursuits of his brethren of Nain were all too humdrum, too low and prosaic for such as he. Could one who had been recalled to life be intended for such stupid work as shaping pots and driving camels? He was meant for higher things. His duty lay in climbing to glorious heights, in preparing for the triumph of the people of God, for the redemption of Israel. What had Juda Bar-Simon said by the Wells of Harod? "The Master has need of you. He has work for such as you. His mission is the saviour's and the king's. Brave deeds are in store for those who will but dare. Join us. We need such sturdy lads, such sons of the old and valiant stock."

He was ready; where now was the work to do? He would seek the Master. He would lay his life, his ser-

vice, and his strength at Messias' feet. He would say: "Here am I, Lord; do with me as you will."

And so, through the clear sunlight of the Syrian spring, along that same flower-bordered highway that he once had trod, a captive and a felon, Bar-Asha strode on. He was no longer the baseless dreamer or the spiritless outcast of that other and fearful day. He was awake, active, alert; determined to be a worker in the ranks of the great Master who had called him back to life—the princely leader who, he was certain, must have come for the bringing in of the triumph and glory of Israel. To be a helper, a soldier, perhaps, in time, a leader in this march to victory—was not this sufficient to fire the heart and strengthen the arm of one who had so much to repay, so much to hope for as had he? Messias just now might be, even as Juda Bar-Simon had said, more a rabbi and a teacher than a conqueror or a king. Even so! He could sit at the Master's feet and learn from him the way to victory and to empire.

Once again the Wells of Harod lay in his path. Once again he dropped down beside the grateful fountains to refresh himself—and to think. Here best, in solitude, could he shape his plans for action in the duty he had chosen as his own.

But, ere the wish that was but father to the thought—the wish for opportunity, the thought of triumph—had time to blossom in his mind, Bar-Asha was no longer alone. The tinkle of approaching camel bells, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the measured tread of the litter-bearers, broke in upon his reverie. Glancing up, he saw coming along the highway from the north a company of travellers whose numbers and appearance betokened the approach of some person of consequence.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMINA THE PRINCESS.

Amina, daughter of Dab-el 'Aretas, King of Nabat and Lord of Petra, was a young and very beautiful Arabian princess. But when policy and passion meet in one kingly desire, any obstacle in the way, even though that obstacle be a young and lovely princess, is apt to be rudely swept aside. Great customs, so we are told, courtesy to great kings—and Herod Antipas, though perhaps not a great king, was as determined as he was unscrupulous when his desires and his opportunities went hand in hand.

Amina, the princess of Nabat, was the lawful wife of the tetrarch of Galilee. But Herod had been to Rome. There he had met Herodias; there he had been conquered by the somewhat brutal beauty of this scheming niece, the wife of his half-brother Philip. The rumor of the coming of a new Messias, that had filled the expectant East, aroused all the fox, all the craftiness in the Antipas. He would forestall this new prophet. He himself would be Messias. In Herodias he found a kindred schemer. He had married the daughter of his neighbor, the king of Arabia, for political reasons; for reasons equally potent he would put her away and install Herodias in her place. With Herod to desire was to do.

Uncle and niece united in their joint scheme for matrimony and messiahship. Herodias should supplant Amina.

But they reckoned without their host. The Princess Amina was not one to sit tamely by and allow herself to be thus cast aside. So, when the lady Herodias followed the tetrarch even to his dominion of Galilee, the outraged Amina quitted the palace at Tiberias. "If she comes, I go," she boldly declared. "Go, then," was the gallant reply of her infamous husband. And go she did.

"Hell," the poet assures us, "has no fury like a woman scorned." And Amina, the princess, waxed more and more furious as she brooded over her disgrace. Was not her father, the 'Aretas, a mightier king than Herod? To him she would go, and he should well pay back her false lord for his perfidy and unfaithfulness.

With laden camels and beasts of burden, with her Nabatæan guard, her personal officials, her women and her slaves, the angry princess was on her way to the south. Instead of crossing the Jordan by the Bridge of the Sons of Jacob she preferred to follow the better highway that led to Jerusalem and the Salt Sea, and her first resting-place as she skirted the hill of Moreh was to be beside the welcome waters of the Wells of Harod.

Only a solitary traveller lay beside the fountains—a Jew, evidently from his dress one of the lower class. Obod, chief of the princess' escort, bade him depart. "Off, fellow," he said; "the princess, wife of Herod the tetrarch, would rest by the wells."

The traveller had clearly no desire to meet any of the household of Herod. He sprang to his feet as if to move away, but the eyes of the Princess Amina were

sharp; her memory was excellent; through the parted curtains of her litter she had caught sight of a face she was not likely to forget.

"Obod," she commanded, with surprise and authority in her voice, "bid the Jew come hither!"

The traveller had evidently learned from experience that it was unwise to strive against superior numbers. Unresistingly, accompanied by Obod and one of the Nabatæan guards, he approached the litter of this royal lady.

"Now by the glory of Malach!" cried the princess, full of wonder; "it is as I thought. Obod, Halema, look; look, I say, upon that face! It is he—the mock prince of Herod's mumming banquet; it is he—the victim of the tetrarch's death-sport! Speak, man; are you not he whom they call Bar-Asha, the Prince of Issachar?"

"Bar-Asha is my name," was the reply.

"And—tell me; by the wonders of Od-dema, I charge you, tell me—did not Herod slay you?"

"It is as you say, O princess," said Bar-Asha.

"Slain, and yet alive! What riddle is this? Stay; did not I hear of a wonderful happening—of a dead man brought to life somewhere amid these hills? And you—was it truth we heard? Are you—speak, Jew, are you that man?"

"I am that man," replied Bar-Asha, simply.

"And who hath done this for you?"

Bar-Asha's handsome face glowed with pride and conviction. "Messias hath touched me, O princess," he made answer. "What Herod did decree, that hath a mightier than Herod overturned. I that was dead am now alive. Messias hath touched me."

Amazement, incredulity, curiosity, overcame the royal imperiousness. "Seek we the fountains, Obod," she said to her chief of escort. "We would rest us here. Jew, attend me. I have that to say may be of profit to you."

Somewhat reluctantly, but yet with a dignity born of his importance, Bar-Asha attended the princess to the wells and stood while she alighted.

"Let the others draw apart, Obod," she commanded. "I would speak with the Jew alone."

Her companions gathered about the other pools that made up the Wells of Harod, and gave themselves up to rest and refreshment. But the princess still looked amazed into the face of him upon whom had fallen this marvellous happening.

"Dead and yet alive," she mused. "'T is wondrous strange. Tell me, I pray you, the truth of the whole matter."

"It is even as I have said, O princess. I that was foully slain by Herod's word, live by Messias' touch. He laid his hand upon me; he said only: 'Young man, I say unto thee, arise!' And, lo! I am living."

"Can such things be?" said the awe-filled princess. "Then is indeed a greater than Herod, a greater even than Rome, in the land. The Messias, of whom your people have so long prated, hath come!"

"He hath come," Bar-Asha said.

"And how comes he? As ruler, conqueror, king? How looks he; where is he?"

"That I go to see," Bar-Asha made reply. "He faded from me while I yet remained entranced. I go to lay my life, my strength, my service at his feet. To say unto him: 'Lord, here am I; do with me as you will.'"

"A mightier than Herod? Then is the tetrarch doomed. Gods of my fathers, I thank you. Ho, maidens, music and the dance; my woes will yet be royally avenged."

From the waiting group around the fountains went up the song of joy; the music of harp and tabor; the languid motions of the dancers of the East. The princess mused a space. Then she said: "You go to lay your service at Messias' feet, you say? Yet wait; be advised by me. Go with a noble following. Go as a conqueror bearing tribute to your prince. See; Arabia shall go with you! I, who was Herod's wife, am Herod's foe. I go to arouse my father, the king, against this false Idumean lord of Galilee. Arabia shall overflow Galilee in anger and in conquest. Go you with the 'Aretas, and when the battle shall have rid the land of this tyrant and deceiver—see! We will give all Galilee, all Farther Jordan into Messias' hand. I who warned you of treachery at Herod's feast—I, even I, Amina the Princess, will lead you to Messias, a prince indeed. Bar-Asha, be advised."

Here, in truth, was temptation. Here was glory to be speedily won. Arabia against Herod! Victory and footing for Messias' kingdom at the very outset! Was not this far better than simply sitting at Messias' feet? He—Bar-Asha, of the princely line—would go before the Master as conqueror in his name. Glory was at hand even earlier than he had dared to hope. And when he offered a redeemed Galilee to Messias as his, already won, what might not follow? Judea, Samaria, all Palestine should be the Lord's. The Roman eagles driven from the land; Messias' kingdom speedily brought

in—and by him; by him, Bar-Asha, for Messias' glory alone! It was a mighty thought.

The princess noted the growth of desire on the young man's face. "Yet more," she said. "See; here is wealth—here is treasure untold." And she drew from her girdle a tiny scroll. "It is but toll from Herod's treasure room. It is my fair portion of the spoils," she laughed. "It needs but a brave man like you, my prince, to bring to light the mystery this unlocks. See," and she unrolled the scroll; "it is the mystic writing that gives the key to buried wealth—the treasure that your great prophet, Moses, hid on Mount Gerizim. That treasure hath never yet been found. We will find it, my prince; and when you bring to Messias as your offering the crown of Galilee, this wealth shall make you mighty indeed, the greatest in his kingdom. Then shall Bar-Asha be a prince in Israel, and I, even I, the Princess Amina, shall be right royally avenged. Ha! Herod; fox, deceiver, lying knave; I hold your ruin here!" and she laid her hand upon Bar-Asha's arm.

Still the lad stood silent. Great thoughts filled his mind; great plans and greater hopes were working in his active brain. But he stood silent.

"Speak, prince," Amina said. "Shall we not together work for this mighty end? And when it is accomplished; when Herod is fallen and Messias reigns; when Rome is driven forth; when Bar-Asha is a prince in Israel—foremost and richest in the land—shall not the Princess Amina, who made this triumph possible, have part and lot therein? Shall I say what that part may be? My fathers were kings, Bar-Asha. So, too, were yours. What shall hinder us from together ruling in this land? I

would be a princess of your nation ; I that am now cast off by the false Herod may become an even greater one among you. See, my prince ! Accomplish what I bid you, and Amina will lay her life, her duty at your feet. Amina will place her hand in yours. Amina, if you will, shall be your loving spouse and wife. Is not this promise for labor worth the doing ?"

The world swam before Bar-Asha's eyes. Was this but a dream again ? In so brief a time, by so short a step was he to achieve glory, wealth, honor, rank ? The hand of the princess rested heavily on his arm. Her touch was like a spell. Her face, fair as the morning, frank and yet full of winsomeness and animation, deeply flushing under her unwomanly offer of herself to him, was dangerously near his own ; her warm breath fanned his cheek ; a whole glorious future seemed within his grasp.

" I labor but for Messias," he said slowly ; " but who could resist so great an opportunity, so royal a gift ? Princess, I am yours ; do with me as you will. If but you lead me in the way that shall bring triumph to Messias, honor to Bar-Asha, happiness to yourself, I shall not have been called back to life in vain. Bid me begin the work. What first is needful ?"

" I go to Machærus first, and then to my father's court," she said. " Go you to Jerusalem straight. Inquire into the ways and wishes of Messias. Enlist his help if you may in our mighty plans. Then to me at Petra. And when my father, the king, marches against Herod, go you with him to victory. I doubt not the result. He who has been given back to life cannot die. He cannot fail. Messias called you for his glory ; think not he will let you fall. When Herod dies, Gerizim's treasure fol-

lows ; and then our day has come. Bar-Asha, prince, be happy. See, here is joy. Before we part do you here celebrate with me the triumph that is to come. Obod ! Room for the princely son of Asha ; wine and refreshing for him who brings joy to your princess. And you, my maidens all, lift higher yet your voices in song. Israel shall be free ; Amina shall be avenged ! "

The joyful strains of jubilee and mirth rose above the Wells of Harod. Royally entertained, Bar-Asha felt himself a prince indeed. The promises of a princess, the smiles of so fair a woman conquered his own sense of the duty he had already swerved from. Thus soon do the temptings of ambition crush out the nobler desires of a wavering mind.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SHEEP-GATE.

THE morning of the next day was well advanced when Bar-Asha climbed the eastern slope of Olivet and looked down upon Jerusalem.

To the dweller in a great city, proud at heart of his home though he be, familiarity breeds the prosaic; his city's wonders lay unnoticed; its grandeur is taken for granted; even its immensity is monotonous. It is to the stranger that the glories of a metropolis are glories indeed. Thus was it with old Jerusalem—"vision of peace." Only when in the last days the Roman heel crushed it in the dust did its people rise for its defence, as ever since, they have bewailed its overthrow.

But to Bar-Asha this view of the Holy City from the crest of Olivet was ever a revelation, an inspiration. Climbing the zigzag way that led from the hill-village of Bethany to the top of the olive-mount, he paused, ere yet he descended to the valley where the Bridge of Arches spanned the narrow Kedron. Before him lay Jerusalem. "Like a ghost from the earth" rose the filmy tower of the temple; outspread beneath his eyes, portico and colonnade, gateway and court marked the noble outlines of the mighty sanctuary. Beside it, grand in its proportions, gorgeous in its adornments, stood the palace of

Herod and, stretching toward the west, backed by the gardens beyond the walls, rose the crowding house-tops, the battlements, towers, temples and palaces of the beautiful city.

Captive to the might of Rome, dead to its ancient glory, all unconscious of its terrible fate, there stood the metropolis of Palestine. Upon " its imperial mantle of proud towers " flashed the glad sunlight ; on gilded roof and marble pinnacle it fell, answering back in the brightness of its glory the gleam of delight that shone in the eyes of this simple lad from the distant hill-country. Love, pride, ambition, hope, stirred within him.

" Awake, O Jerusalem," the words sang in his heart like a glorious prophecy ; " arouse thee, daughter of Zion ! The time of thy captivity is passed ; the hour of thy deliverance is at hand. Even now thou hast saluted thy redeemer though thou knew him not. Honor him, O beautiful temple ; exalt him, O city of our love ! He will yet deliver thee from the hand of the spoiler ; he will yet make thy glory of the past to be but as water to the strong wine of thy marvellous future. And I, his faithful follower, shall be a helper in this mighty work. I shall share in thy glory. Into thy gates, O city of the king, shall I yet come as prince, as victor, in Messias' train ! "

The spell of the place was upon him. Like a presage of victory, through that clear Syrian air, the flashing turrets of the Holy City, bound yet free, captive yet a conqueror, more glorious grown by the glamour of this distant view, reflected on his eager face the promise of the future. There was inspiration even in his point of vision. Here, where he stood, upon these very slopes of

Olivet fronting the rising sun, had his fathers of the tribe of Issachar in the old, old days encamped about their wondrous tabernacle with their standards and their ensigns, set apart for victory. From Issachar should the triumph come. The son of David and the son of Asha together should redeem all Israel ; they should revive the ancient glory !

Down into the valley of the Kedron, across the Bridge of Arches and up the slope to the Sheep-Gate Bar-Asha walked, a stranger to the throngs that now surrounded him—a stranger, but one day, so he reasoned, one day to be known and honored of them all.

He paused in the open portals of the Sheep-Gate to study the passing throng. From this way and from that, between the city proper, the market stalls and open booths without the walls, moved an ever-shifting crowd. Here were men of every nation and of every land—the Roman soldier, the Greek merchant, the Arabian from beyond the eastern hills and the further desert ; men of Egypt, of Ethiopia and the burning south ; traders and travellers from the shores of the Great Sea ; fellow-countrymen from every part of Palestine ; merchants and chief men of the city ; lord and laborer, freeman and slave, rich and poor—all sorts and conditions of men, intent on their own duties and their own pleasures, their buying and their selling, their losses and their gains, ignorant of the glory that was to come to Israel, perhaps even indifferent to it all, not knowing that the Messias they so longed for indeed had come, that the glory of the Lord was already round about them.

Thus studying and thus musing, while upon him fell something of that loneliness that always encompasses the

stranger in a great city, the young traveller from the north leaned against the broad wall whence sprang the arched span above the city gate. Suddenly from out the passing crowd a face flashed recognition. How welcome in the solitude of crowds is such a gleam. Then came the extending of hands, the joyful *shalom !* of greeting.

"Bar-Asha ; at last !"

"You, Bar-Simon ? And is—is the Master here ?"

"I knew you would come ! I have looked for you since that wonderful day at Nain. Do you doubt us now ?"

"Doubt ? I am full of faith. I am eager to labor for the cause. Is the Master here ?"

Bar-Simon drew him aside. "Come apart," he said ; "I would talk with you in quiet." And, with a gesture that bade him follow after, Bar-Simon led his companion up the narrow stairs to where in the public chamber over the city gate they could look down upon the busy, restless throng below.

"No, son of Asha, the Master is not yet here. He tarries in the north ; but I am here to prepare lodging for our company in the city. They come hither speedily."

"Where lodge ye ?"

"In an upper chamber on the Bakers' Street, over yonder, beyond the temple."

"An upper chamber only ! And why not in Herod's marble palace ? Why not in the castle of the Roman despots ?"

"The time is not yet, son of Asha," Bar-Simon answered, with a smile at the lad's impetuosity. "The Master—why I know not—works only among the common people. He makes no move against Herod ;

he confesses no scheme against Rome. Of our company of twelve that follow him, not one is of rank or birth. They are fishermen, carpenters, laborers all—save indeed Mattathias, and he is—what think you ?—a tax-gatherer, one of the accursed ! I cannot fathom it all, but beneath it the Master, I know, hath a deep-laid plan. And so I bide my time. It is slow work, withal, but you surely do not doubt Messias' power ?"

" Doubt ! when he brought me back to life ? Doubt ! when I have told you I am burning with impatience to be about his work ? The Master is all-wise. Perchance it is his plan to win first the common people to his cause, and, with them at his back, to make his stand for freedom. He knoweth best. But surely he will welcome any move among his followers that will help forward his triumph. Think you not so ? And I, son of Simon, though so late a comer to his cause, I have not been idle. See " ; and the young fellow, all on fire with enthusiasm and hope, detailed to the listening Juda so much of his plan as related to the design of the Princess Amina and the help of Arabia—but nothing as to the buried treasures of Gerizim, nothing as to his winning of the princess. These were surely his own affairs, and of these it were wiser to say nothing.

Juda Bar-Simon caught the lad's enthusiasm. " Why, this is grand news, brother. Said I not that we had glory in store for you ? Herod defeated ; Arabia friendly ! Why, the victory is half ours already. I myself will help. I will raise my brethren beyond Jordan and in Trachonitis. They rebel already at the tyranny of these Herods ; they will rise at a word. A blow at Herod is a blow at Rome. But caution is needed. Mes-

sias' plans are known only to himself. He still assumes to be but a wandering rabbi, a helper of the sick and sorrowing. It is well. We will not thrust our plans upon him until they prove themselves strong. I will say nothing to him of your scheme. If the 'Aretas win, it is well. If he fail, then in the hour of defeat shall Messias speak the word, and, by his mighty power, bring victory out of failure. Thus shall the day we look for be brought in. Herod shall fall ; Rome be driven back ; Israel shall be free. Then, proud city, you shall know your deliverer—know and honor him. Yon lordly Pharisee, who would scarcely deign a word with me of Kerioth, shall sue for place and power in Messias' kingdom—from you, Bar-Asha, the camel-driver of Nain, from me, Juda, the knifeman. Ay, brother, our day is coming fast."

"And what doth the Master now?" Bar-Asha inquired. "Doth he say naught of rousing the people in strife against their tyrants ; nothing of organizing them for victory?"

"Said I not that Messias works in other guise than that the common conqueror seeks?" Bar-Simon replied. "His ways are not our ways ; and yet, trust me, son of Asha, all things work together for good. The Master, as you say, is all-wise. He does not court the fate of Judas the Gaulonite, of Shimeon Bar-Simri, of Athrongeus the shepherd. He works by less presumptuous ways. Herod is powerful. His hand is heavy. Already has Johanan, whom men call the Baptist—that rabbi of the deserts, who has openly proclaimed himself the herald of Messias, who as openly has said that our Master, the Rabbi Jeshua, is Messias in very truth—already has he, because of his boldness, been seized by Herod's orders

and thrust into the dungeons of Machærus the Black. Such fate would be ruin to our Master's plans. He bides his time ; he calmly waits the hour to strike, and though to us who follow him closely he gives vague hintings of his coming kingdom, aloud he doth proclaim that his kingdom is not of this world. But if not of this world, where then ? Of what worth to Israel is Messias if he cometh not to redeem our land ? But he will redeem it. He doth but cloak his purpose under cautious speech. He works by careful ways. Every sick man healed, every devil-ridden sufferer purified, every dead man brought, like you, to life, is but a follower gained, a helper added to his ranks. Doubt not that, when he speaks the word and raises, here under the shadow of the temple or yonder amid the hills of Galilee, the standard of revolt, they and all their kin, all Israel, in fact, will rally to his call and join heartily in the deeds that must bring us victory—victory and riches ! It is for this I wait ; for this I follow the Master day by day ; doing the petty offices he appoints ; bearing the bag that holds the sorry treasures of our little company. The treasurer of the twelve—son of Asha, see you not the prophecy ? —the treasurer of the Master's twelve shall become the lord treasurer of Messias' kingdom, that kingdom that shall be a union of the twelve chosen tribes, gathered together once again and bound into a mighty state. Ah, yes ! Juda Bar-Simon can wait ! I am of Kerioth, the poverty-stricken land beyond the hills. From my youth wealth has been my desire—wealth and power. And when I am become the lord treasurer of the kingdom of Messias, shall not the poor man of Kerioth find that the long dream, the one hope of his life, is royally fulfilled ? "

"Our desires run the same way, brother," Bar-Asha said, "but in different fashion. Go you forward with your duties; I will go with mine. This very day I join the princess at Machærus. Then for Arabia and the army of the 'Aretas. And after that—victory! Bear well your promise of assistance when the battle joins. And, after the victory, then shall dawn the greater glory. Yours, son of Simon, yours and mine, and that of all the loyal sons of Israel. Messias brought me back to life but to help on his plans, and I will mightily help them on. Tremble, Herod! Rome, beware! Jerusalem, city of the Lord, sleep on in ignorance of the greatness that is to be. Messias shall rule; and on your streets and in your palaces shall come the great and notable day of the salvation of the Lord! And then shall not I, to whom the Master gave life, shall not Bar-Asha, son of kings, be a prince in Israel, mighty in the land I love? Son of Simon, I can see it all. Hail to the Future!"

So they talked on, wrapped in their visions of the glory that was to be revealed, confident of a future that was to hold for them both nothing but success. Together they roamed the streets of the beautiful city, entered the gorgeous temple, viewed the palace of Herod and the fortress that held the soldiers of Rome. They even selected their own palaces, and, full of hope, parted at the Su-san gate as the day waned, and Bar-Asha took his way toward Machærus and Arabia.

CHAPTER X.

MAGALATH THE MAGIAN.

PETRA the red, Petra the rock city, puzzle of the modern archæologist and home of the nomad kings, lay color-filled and glistening under the ardent sun of the East. No city of antiquity was more curious, none more picturesque. Girdled by wonderful rose-colored cliffs of sandstone; backed by higher walls of white limestone and mountains of yellow sand; carefully hidden, "like a precious pearl, in the midst of the mountains of Edom," it was at once the storehouse, the stronghold, and the capital of that dynasty of the Bedawin kings of Arabia, known under their family name of the 'Aretas.

Developed from wandering robber-chieftains into merchants, from merchants into princes, from princes into conquerors, these feudal lords of the desert tribes had gradually extended their authority until all the land from the Red Sea to Damascus and from the mountains of Edom eastward to the great desert acknowledged them as rulers.

Through its only approach—a narrow defile that cleft the rich red precipices that rose two hundred feet above it—ran the paved roadway over which to the east and west passed in richly laden caravans the commerce of the world. Here was the meeting-place of many nations;

here, hewn out of the rosy rocks,—streaked now with purple, or now with yellow, blue, or chocolate-tinted veins,—were the palaces, the temples, and the dwellings of a wealthy and busy mountain metropolis. Rock-hewn stairways led up to splendid buildings carved in the variegated sandstone; luxurious vines and gorgeous flowers trailed and bloomed everywhere; it was like a dream of Oriental fancy, a vision of fairy architecture or an enchanter's empire, a city carved from a petrified rainbow.

And here in one of the audience rooms of the palace of the king, not many days after the interview in the Sheep-Gate, sat Cheliel Bar-Asha of Nain.

No longer a humble camel-driver, the young adventurer shone resplendent in the "soft raiment" he so coveted—the fine linen of Syria, the rich purple of Tyre, the fringed mantles of the farther East. Near to him on a soft divan, in all the beauty and picturesqueness that robed the king's daughters of those luxurious days, reclined the Princess Amina; and, facing them both, sat a noble figure, clad in flowing robes, stately, commanding, imperious. This was the 'Aretas himself—Dab-el, King of Nabat, Lord of Farther Syria and of Damascus, protector of the caravans and chieftain of the desert.

For nearly forty years had he ruled as king in the land. Egyptian and Hebrew, Syrian and Persian, the pirates of the Red Sea and the strangers beyond the great desert respected his power and had felt the weight of his arm, while even the legions of Rome had fallen back crippled and defeated before his kingly spear. It was ill to trifle with so stout a fighter as he.

The rage of the old king over Herod's insult to his

daughter had cooled into a philosophic hatred since the day that the princess, fleeing from the territory of her false husband, had come a suppliant to the rock-hewn home of her father in the Red City. With the deliberation born of power, all too slow for the hot revenge of Amina and the feverish desires of Bar-Asha, the 'Aretas had at last issued his commands, and an army of bowmen and spearmen was even now gathering at Bostra in the north.

"'The more haste the worse speed,' quoth the tailor to his long thread," was his reply to the urgent counsels of his imperious daughter for instant action. "Trust me, girl, I know when to strike. I do know this Antipas as I knew his father before him; foxes need watching ere they be trapped into the pit."

"Ay, my father," the princess replied, "but is it not true as well that he who would trap a fox must rise betimes?"

"Even so, daughter," the old king made answer, "but know you not that for all one's early rising the day comes none the sooner? Trust me to know when to dig and when to bait the trap. Soon enough is well enough. Besides, I would know more of this unknown king of the Jews of whom you and your would-be Prince of Issachar do speak, as of an ally. Is he warrior or prince; or is he but another of those Jewish robbers that rise at times against Rome and Herod, only to lose their craven lives? Such are no allies of mine. The look of the brave man is better than the spear of the coward. I would learn more of this unknown aider."

"Surely my father does not need this help? Surely he fears not one like Herod the Antipas?"

"Fear, girl!" and the old eyes flashed fire. "Shall I, whom Egypt cannot fright nor Rome conquer, fear a Herod? The princes of the 'Aretas line have been kings and conquerors for more generations than you have known years. But when two dogs fight doth not the third dog run away with the bone? For aught I know, your new king of the Jews may be but a bone-getter, and I have no stomach to find food for other people's eating. Let me know more of this Messias, as you call him."

And so it came to pass that, placed as we have seen, the three who hated Herod held counsel as to him who was to be Herod's successor.

The 'Aretas stroked his long beard thoughtfully and eyed his young guest. "And this hidden king," he asked—"your Messias, if you will, how know you him to be king or messias? Truth to say, hiders are good finders, and the snail slideth up the tower at last, though the swallow mounteth it not. And yet the snail is not fitted to soar. This Messias—is he warrior, prince, or prophet? What hath he done to prove his kingship? Who is he? How know you him to be either messias, lord, or king?"

"I that was dead, O king, am living by his word," Bar-Asha replied. "Is not that proof sufficient unto me? But more. This is he, O king, foretold by our prophets from the days of Father Abraham and of that Moses whose name your people honor—that Moses who, with his word, did open this cleft in your cliffs which you do call the Way of Moses. Messias is a greater than Abraham, a mightier than Moses. The stars sang at his birth, and it is even said that certain of the wise men and wizards from the East were led by the stars they worship to seek his birth-bed and to do homage

to the Messias even as he lay cradled in Bethlehem of Judah."

"The wizards—the diviners! Is there magic in it too?" cried the old king. "Stay a bit! I have diviners in my palace here who have read the stars and showed me fate and fortune. I mind me of something they have said of such a one as this. Ha, I have it!" And he clapped his hands thrice. "So; bid Magalath the Magian to our presence," he said to the slave who entered. "He did tell me years ago, when first he came among us, some misty story of his following a star to find a king. 'T was in the days of the older Herod, though I did give it little heed. Let him recall the tale. I will even pit his memory against your belief. Perchance out of two rumors we may pluck the truth."

He came at last—Magalath the Magian, whom the Greeks called Melchior. An old, old man, his strong face furrowed with the marks of years—years of study, of mysticism, of searching to find the Unsearchable. His eyes, bright and piercing, had ever a far-away look, as if he strove to discern what was as yet undiscernible. With the low salaam of Oriental respect, courteous but not servile, honoring but not obsequious, he stood before the 'Aretas.

"You have summoned me, O king. Behold, I am here."

"Good Magalath," the king said, "for no trial of your mystic art, for no questioning of the stars you worship, have I bidden you come. It is to recall the past. When first you came among us you had much to say of a certain magic star that had brought you from the land of your fathers even to the dominions of my neighbor, Herod, to

do homage to an infant king. It was not the Archelaus nor the Antipas nor any of the coward sons of the Idumean Herod. Who was it? Tell us your story. There are grave rumors of strange happenings in the Kingdom of the Jews that set us all a-wonder. He who goeth to the chase shall saddle the right horse, lest he be thrown. Let us catch the right one. Tell us, I pray you, your story, that we may put the pieces together and see whose tower we rear."

And Magalath the Magian made answer :

" For years and years on Persian towers, O king, have the Magian brotherhood watched for the star that, so our prophet king has sung, should herald the coming of the new Redeemer. This was to be him who should, with might and power, slay fell Ahriman, the Spirit of Evil, and rebuild the world for righteousness. For long, long years we read the heavens well and yet the star came not. Twelve of our holiest—Dastûr Mobeds all—were ever on the watch, and the high tower from which we swept the heavens at night was called the Tower of Victory. At last it came. It came after long waiting and watching, when men had grown heavy with the weight of years, and generations of Mobeds seeking for that which came not fell on death. It came ; and I, the youngest of the twelve, discerned it first. It came upon my vision—a star of power, a star of flashing light. And in the midst I saw a wondrous sight—a child of glory robed about with brightness, bearing a blood-red cross. 'The star ; brothers, it is the star !' I cried. 'Zosiosh is come !' And all the twelve saw it ; and we bowed ourselves in wonder and in praise. And even as we looked, lo ! from out the star came the call : 'To distant Judah go, O weary watch-

ers; go bearing gifts, and seek beneath my guiding light for him who is born King of the Jews!' So we went, bearing gifts—gold for the king, frankincense for the god, myrrh for the man. And as we journeyed we asked of all men: 'Know ye where we may find him that is born King of the Jews?' But no man knew the royal one we sought, save as it might be Herod the king. But Herod was old and full of years and would have tampered with us as we tarried at Jerusalem. And ever the star shone on before us. It rested not on Herod's royal palace; it lingered not above Jerusalem. But lo! as we yet watched it halted before us and grew in glory and in brightness. Even over Bethlehem in Judah it rested, and there, going quickly, we found, neither in temple nor in palace, but in the low stable of a khan where beasts did stand about and humble folk sought shelter, there we found, cradled in a manger, pillowed on the straw, the king we had come to worship! And there we did him homage. A babe, cradled in a manger! But there we worshipped him. Out of the weak, we said, shall come forth strength. Out of the lowly shall arise the mighty one! Hail, King of the Jews! we cried, and bowed in adoration. Hail, Zosiosh—the Oshanderbegha, redeemer, deliverer, ruler! This is he foretold by our prophet-king, he who shall found his kingdom of the world, who shall conquer Ahriman, Spirit of Evil, raise the very dead to serve and honor him, and lead the world to his sway. Hail, Mighty One, Redeemer, Lord of all the World! we cried, and, reverencing the child, laid our gifts before him and went our way. And I, even I, Magalath the Magian, Magalath the Mobed—ay! the Dastûr-Mobed, chiefest now of all my brotherhood, returned not to my native land, but waited here, even in thy

courts, O king, where I might be near to witness his glory and see the triumph of the Lord. For surely I shall not taste of death till I see the Lord—Zosiosh, Messias, King, coming into his kingdom."

The magian ended.

"'T is a curious tale," the 'Aretas spoke. "A king born in a manger? A mighty prince cradled among the beasts. Raises he the dead, say you? Then—why here, even here, O Magalath, see your prophecy fulfilled! For here, even here, is one whom this king, this Messias did indeed raise from the dead to be a helper in his cause."

"Thou?" and the dark eyes sought the face of Bar-Asha with eager look. "Did Messias raise thee from the dead?"

"Even so, O father," the young man replied.

The old magian bowed himself thrice toward the sun. He raised his hands in air. "Ye gods, I thank thee," he said. "The King indeed has come. Now shall I see the glory."

And the king, the 'Aretas, said: "It is well. Give me your hand, my prince; I am yours for the overthrow of Herod, yours for alliance with this heaven-sent King of the Jews. Good Magalath, give me of your wisdom and your counsel in this matter, for it doth touch us all."

And together king and magian strode out of the apartment, each busied with his own thoughts and plans, each bent on the self-same end—the helping of this manger-cradled king.

"So far all is well, my prince," Amina said. "The victory is assured. And after victory, what? Solve we this riddle of the treasure scroll. If you would bring wealth to your bride, O son of Asha, study its mysteries carefully with me; for here indeed is wealth. And wealth is power!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTIC SCROLL.

SEATED side by side upon the broad divan, the eager young treasure-seekers studied the mystic scroll. It held but little and told them still less. Its meagre characters were strange and unfamiliar. Knowledge in those old days was held but by the few. Instruction for children was of the briefest and was largely oral. Only enough Chaldaic was taught to enable young people to decipher a few verses of the law, unless, indeed, the boy was to be made a rabbi. Not until a whole generation after Christ, in the year 64, were public schools established in Palestine. Not until then did the high-priest, Jeshua of Gamala, make education obligatory; not until that day did the words of the rabbis tell of a real progress: "Perish the sanctuary, but let the children go to school." "The breath of the children who attend school is the strongest safeguard of society!"

The schooling of an Arabian princess of those pagan days was even less than that of a Jewish peasant, and had the mysterious scroll been in Greek, or Syriac, or even the more familiar Chaldaic, these two uneducated ones who hung over it could scarcely have compassed its meaning. How impossible, then, to decipher that which was to them no more intelligible than an utter blank.

But joint study over an insoluble problem often brings about much more than a deciphering of crabbed characters. Young hearts beat with equal fervor, whether beneath the rich robes of ancient Oriental fashion or the more conventional coverings of these modern days. Looks that are full of meaning, the short, quick breath or long-drawn sigh that alike tell of emotions scarce concealed, the unmistakable language of caressing hands or slowly yielding forms,—these are as old as the world, as easily translatable in ancient Petra as in modern London or Paris or New York. Cheliel, the son of Asha, was as susceptible to these emotions as is any young fellow in whose veins warm blood and ardent leaps and surges. Amina, daughter of the 'Aretas, needed no lesson that should teach her how to love or how to tell that love.

The untranslated scroll fell unheeded to the floor. Hand-clasp and twining arms were more eloquent of meaning than the crabbed characters that might hold in their tracing the secret of all the treasures of Gerizim. The head of the fairest of Orientals dropped upon the breast of the handsome Jew. Eye met eye, lip touched lip. The son of Asha was more utterly a prisoner, bound and held in stronger fetters, then when compassed by Roman spears or immured in the sealed dungeon of Herod's palace at Tiberias.

The stern teachings of the iron Torah were all forgotten ; flung to the winds were the mandates of his nation's Law ; the harsh tenets of the rabbis were as if they were not. Her breath was warm upon his cheek ; her fingers clung to his own with a touch that was tenderer, yet more irresistible than all the traditions of Israel ; the strange, sweet odors from her perfumed gar-

ments were as pleasant incense, even as the mystic drug that lulls the senses and soothes while it intoxicates. He was hers. Body and soul yielded to the resistless spell her caresses threw about him. The past was even as was the future—unheeded, uncared for. Only the present was life.

The very atmosphere of love was all about them ; the spirit of love breathed in the perfumed air and with a cadence in her voice that told at once of passion and possession, of giving and of gaining, Amina sang for Cheliel's ears alone her triumph-song :

" You are mine !
You are mine !
'Round you fast love's chain I twine—
Firm and fast until you see
Love's relentless tyranny.

" You shall have but lips for me, dear ;
Ears but for my slightest tone ;
Eyes that only me shall see, dear ;
Feet that run for me alone.
Thus, enchainèd, shall you see
Love's relentless tyranny."

And as thus shrined within the pressure of those encircling arms, a captive yet the captor, Amina gave herself up to the bliss that she had herself invited, wooing with soft whispers, interchanging protestation and vow, what to her were the insults of Herod or the lost dominions of Galilee? Here was her king, her country, and her god.

But even such seasons of bliss must end. A halting step sounded in the corridors without. Propriety broke

the spell of love. The curtains parted slowly and into the room came once again Magalath the Magian.

"Your pardon, gracious princess," he said, "but I would once again speak with the young man whom Messias brought to life."

Bar-Asha's eyes were full of inquiry. "Speak, O wise one," Amina said.

"Excess of joy oft makes one sadly mute," the old magian began. "The sight of him who turns the prophecy of years of weary waiting into earnest truth, the tidings of the greater joy that dawneth on the world—these made your servant dumb. I must be alone with my soul: apart in my great thanksgiving. But now I come for question. This lord and king—how looked he; how stood he; what said he?"

"Alas, my father," the young man made sad reply, "to me Messias is but as a vision, a dream; naught else. His touch, indeed, aroused me from the death-sleep; his word brought again the strong life-blood to my veins; but with a smile only he passed from my halted *mittah*, and when I was fully awakened, lo! he was not. I know him only through his magic touch, only through the speech of those who work within his circle and his life."

"And what say they?"

"They say that he is Messias; that he is Prince, indeed!"

"But know you not, O youth, that one eye-witness is better than ten hearsays?" the old magian said. "Why not seek him out even as did I and my brethren the wondrous star and see his glory with your own eyes?"

"What need to seek him out, O my father," the young man made answer. "I know enough; for this one thing

I know—I that was dead live now and by Messias' touch. I am his and——" ; here a silent glance at the princess told the rest.

"And you would fight for him ?"

"I would ; good father, I must ! Messias works within me to compel allegiance. His touch, his smile have put the hero here," and Bar-Asha laid a hand upon his heart. "And more ; yet more," he added ; "only through his triumph can come the place and power that I crave—the pomp that I will have."

"True, good youth, but—trust me, I am old and know well the ways of man—you are but a poor Galilean ; though, perchance, of royal stock. The favor of princes—ay, the love of princesses, even—nay, start not, my children, I can read your thoughts,—may be but brief and fleeting. He who would win under the banner of Zosiosh, he who would be indeed a prince of that glorious kingdom, must needs have other than strong hand and stout heart to find him place and preference. They call you prince, and yet you are without following, without fame, without fortune. Know you not that a lord without riches is but as a soldier without arms—only ridiculous ? Whence is your wealth to come ?"

The princess would have protested. "Love is more than gold, O wise one," she said. "He to whom the Princess Amina gives her troth—he who like her has suffered cruel wrong from the tyrant Herod—he who comes to her through death, immortal as the gods—he hath no need for wealth to gain him place and power."

But Bar-Asha, turned thus to more practical thoughts, cast his eyes downward. They fell upon the long-discarded scroll. He started, and, tapping the parchment

with his foot, he said, with an assumed carelessness: "Here, O father, even at my feet, lieth my power to be what I shall be. Here is my fortune. Read and know the secret of my hope."

The princess threw a quick glance of wondering approval at her shrewd young lover. Magalath the Magian stooped and lifted the scroll from the floor.

"A scroll?" he exclaimed; "why, what is this? It is the ancient papyrus. And the writing?—why, here are the old, old characters of the Land of Kem, that Egypt of the Pharaohs, from whence 't is said the riches that once filled yonder rock-hewn temple did come; from whence came, too, that Moses of old whose mystic rod cleft a way for the waters through these rosy cliffs. And this is what?"

"Read you aloud and see," still with seeming indifference Bar-Asha said. "You who would question where I look for the fortune that would help Messias' cause, read the scroll and learn."

The old man was examining the writing with critical care. "It is but a fragment of the whole," he said; "a copy of some old, old scroll, made, perchance, to keep in existence the main matter, lest its original should waste away and disappear. And this is all it says:

'"ON THAT SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN OF THE GERIZZITES WHERE IT GOETH DOWN TO THE PLACE OF SHALEM; FROM THE TWELVE STONES IN THE FOURTH COURSE OF THE PALACE OF KING MELCITZDEK WHERE JESHUA SETTETH UP THE LAW: FORTY CUBITS, LESS ONE, TOWARD THE SETTING SUN, BELOW THE STONE WHICH, WHEN THE SUN STANDETH TWO HOURS PAST THE MID-DAY, MAKETH THE SHADOW OF A RUNNING MAN—LIFT.'

"'T is a strange direction, surely, and an old hieroglyph. Truth to say, there be few that can decipher it, but I was schooled in the learning of the older Egypt. Read I it aright?" And he went carefully through it once again.

"You have read it aright, O most wise one," Bar-Asha shrewdly replied. "Few indeed do know its secret." He had gained his end even sooner than he had hoped. Every word sank deep into his memory. He could never forget them. The fortune of Gerizim was his! Already in fancy he saw it all—the four courses of ancient masonry, the twelve stones, the afternoon shadow of the running man. Wealth and power were within his grasp.

"And this is your fortune, gallant youth?" Magalath slowly said. "I fathom it not as yet, though it doth smack of hidden treasure," and he handed the scroll to the younger man. "Well, whate'er betide, use well your gifts for Messias' strengthening, for they may bring again the glory to the land of your fathers, peace and prosperity to a sorrowing world. And when he is enthroned King of the Jews in truth, then will I, who have waited for his day so long, once more do homage to him foretold by our prophet-king in the days when the stars in their courses made prophecy of the glory that was to be."

The old man's lips moved as if in silent prayer. His noble head was bowed; his eyes seemed piercing the veil of the future, catching a vision of the time for which so many, many years his soul had waited. And thus they left him.

CHAPTER XII.

"BELIEVEST THOU THIS?"

PRIEST and Levite, doctor and scribe walked in Solomon's Porch—the outer cloister of the vast temple at Jerusalem, opening into the great Court of the Gentiles. There they discussed the questions of the day that seemed to them more vital than the welfare of their land or the laws of God Himself. Neglecting the weightier matters of the Law they disputed as to purification, as to individual offerings and the law of retaliation. Hilellite and Shammaite, Herodian and Sadducee, grim Essene and yet grimmer Zealot, they reasoned, they labored, they discussed, impatient of opposition, scornful of control; full of the letter, rather than of the spirit of their customs and their faith—bent on pulling down, even though the ruin fell upon their stubborn heads; always half-rebels, both in word and in thought, filling the air with their bickerings, talking much and loudly, but all to little purpose.

"*Shalom!* Jair the son of Pharez. And what brings you down from Chorazin?" inquired the Rabbi Bar-Zaccai of one whom he passed as he pushed his way to the tables of the money-changers. "You were not wont to be among us in the temple, save on the greater feast days. Is it well with you in the north, among the wheat-fields of Galilee?"

"It is indeed well with us in body, O worthy rabbi," the one thus addressed made answer. "My little daughter Adah, whom we did deem lost to us, is living and in health. Why should we not rejoice? I am come to seek the opinion of the Sanhedrim on matters of doubt to that of mine own city. Have they gathered yet by the gate of Susa?"

"Ay, so I have heard; there are questions to draw them there to-day if but sufficient numbers be within. Pilate hath threatened to place the images again over the temple gate, and certain of the Essenes have convened the Sanhedrim to make their protest. What matter have you with them?"

"One of great import to me. Come you with me and you shall hear."

"That will I if you will but wait for me. Let me but get the silver shekels to drop into the *shopharoth;* and then will I join you."

And Bar-Zaccai hurried away.

Jair the son of Pharez, the well-to-do merchant of Chorazin, called of men the Just, waited for his friend within the archway of Solomon's Porch. Below him stretched the narrow Valley of Kedron, green in its bright spring dress; before him, rose the Tombs of the Prophets and the storied slope of Olivet. He leaned against one of the marble pillars supporting the sculptured roof of the cloister that lifted itself fifty feet above him. Will they agree? he mused. Surely my plea for such a one as this is of more value to Israel than the law of offerings, more even than this question of Pilate's images. For, if this be indeed Messias, Pilate and his images stay no more among us.

Bar-Zaccai speedily joined him. "I have my offering for *corban* here," he said. "Let me but drop it into the *shopharoth* before the Beautiful Gate, and then together will we go to the Sanhedrim."

Within the cloistered court into which opened the Gate of Susa the Sanhedrim was met—that assemblage of "priests, Levites, and pure Israelites," who decided on questions of importance in town and synagogue, and on all matters of religious question and of minor law in which the Roman conquerors allowed them jurisdiction. And here, before the grave assembly, stood, soon after, Jair the son of Pharez, the Galilean merchant well known and accredited to them as the *rosh* or ruler of the synagogue at Chorazin, near to the shores of Galilee.

"Men and brethren," he said, earnestness and anxiety lending a still deeper flush to the native olive of his face, "I come before you for the settlement of a question upon which our home Sanhedrim at Chorazin do differ sadly. Know ye that a certain devout teacher, called of men the Rabbi Jeshua of Nazareth and sometime of Capernaum——"

A murmur of disapproval filled the cloister. "We have heard of this man, O brother," said the Beth-Din, or "Father of the Tribunal." "Hath he been disquieting the good folk in Chorazin too?"

"Disquieting, say you!" Jair the ruler cried. "Nay, rather hath he been doing such deeds of blessing as have disquieted only those who are stiff-necked and perverse."

"Hold, brother!" interrupted the Beth-Din, sternly. "Such names are not seemly toward those who would repel a blasphemer."

"Blasphemer?"

"Ay, blasphemer! Rumors of this man have come to us; stories of strange doings that smack too much of sorcery and magic. Are you, too, among those whom he hath led away?"

"Nay; hear me, my brothers. My daughter, dear to my heart—my Adah, that was dead——"

"Was dead?" again interrupted the Father of the Sanhedrim. "Was, say you—and is now alive? What sorcery is this?"

"No sorcery, but truth. She was dead and was brought back to life, in mine own sight, in mine own house at Chorazin by this Rabbi Jeshua. Can he be, as some do say, Messias? Has the glory of Israel come at last? Summon him, I pray you, to the temple here. Bid him speak to the people in the outer court. See and hear for yourself if this be not——"

But he could go no further. Into his torrent of words burst the loud clamor of an angry throng; and the stern voice of the Father of the Tribunal called to him: "Stay this babbling speech, O son of Pharez. It ill beseemeth one of your station among the people. The spells of the sorcerer, the toils of this lying Netser, O man of Chorazin, are about you and yours."

"But what sayeth your own teachings?" cried this Jair the indomitable. "They say that Messias will first raise those who sleep in the dust. Hath any raised the dead since the days of Elisha? It is thus the Rabbi Jeshua cometh. He——"

"Peace, fool," again rang out the voice of the Father. "What says the Mishna? 'A plague on those who give themselves up to false calculations on Messias.' God himself withholds the fulfilment. It is not for you to say

how or when Messias cometh. This rabbi of yours is a blasphemer. He is *raca*—accursed. Cast him from your thoughts or fear the wrath of your brethren and your God. What said Elijah to the son of Levi? 'Messias will come to-day if you obey the law.' This do, O Jair the son of Pharez, and prate not to us of sorcerers and false prophets who deceive you with their magic and cajole silly women, such as must be those of your household."

The din grew louder about the worthy merchant of Chorazin. What said this false rabbi? was asked of him. What spell did he use?

"Nay, no spell; only words of cheer," Jair made answer. "He has healed many sick among us, and when my daughter died I was driven of my grief to go to him. But he said to me: 'Be not afraid; only believe.' And to those who mourned about the couch, he said: 'Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.' And yet I saw her die. And to Adah herself he said: 'Damsel, I say unto thee, arise!' and she arose and walked. Was this a spell? Was this sorcery? If it were, then were it wise to hope for such among you here at Jerusalem? For no man ever yet did such a deed of gracious good as this great rabbi visited on me and mine. If ye disown—if ye use not his mighty gifts, you will repent it. Ay, he said to me—hear me out, for I will speak—he said to me: 'Believe!' And I do believe. I believe in his power, in his grace, in his mission from the God of Israel to raise our nation from the dust, to raise and rule it——"

He could say no more. They thronged about him in their rage. They pressed upon him. "Possessed; he is possessed!" they cried. "Thrust him forth!" And

only the friendly offices of such as not believing yet pitied him—Bar-Zaccai and others—saved him from the fatal blows that oft-times raged so hotly beneath the gilded roofs of this gorgeous Temple of the Lord.

And the Father of the Tribunal said: "Nay; if this man had vexed us longer, I would have had him bastinadoed. Even his high station in his own place should not save him from the punishment he so well deserved. Messias come, and in such a guise as this? Not so, my brothers. Messias cometh, if indeed he comes at all, in might and power; not as a Netser; not in the manner of a rejected peasant of Galilee. We who look for the Consolation of Israel—for Shiloh, for Yinnom, for Chaninah, for Menachem, for Messias—look for such signs and wonders as Eliezer, the son of Abena, did prophesy—for wars and rumors of wars, for troubles in all nations and in all lands, for the mighty strife of Gog and Magog which only our prince, our Messias, can still. This sorcerer of Galilee, this disturber of our peace, this wandering Nazarene, this Rabbi Jeshua, as they do call him, is but a pestilential fellow. But if he stirs up to dispute with us such as this Jair of Chorazin, it is time for us to act. It were well that he be apprehended and brought hither for judgment. It were even wise, my brothers, to send spies from out among us into the ways of Galilee to look after this man, and perchance to fasten some criminal charge upon him. No good to Israel can come of a homeless, juggling Netser, who claims to be the Sent of God. See ye to this."

And so it came to pass that two scribes of the temple were forthwith despatched to the north to see and report for themselves of this trouble-stirrer who had risen to vex the land.

But in that little home beyond the gates of Chorazin, a fair young girl restored to life and health remembered only the gentle words that brought her back from the solitude of death—from that dreamless blank that gave to her now no memories and no visions of the mysteries she had so nearly pierced. Young as she was, she yet could say of him who had given her life, and say believingly: "It was indeed Messias—my Lord and my God!" And from that day she seemed to her friends as one touched with the holiness from on high—a child of the immortals.

CHAPTER XIII.

BELOW THE CAMEL'S HUMP.

High on the "hump" of that remarkable ridge that overlooks, on the west, the sunlit Sea of Galilee, and that men called Gamala ("the Camel"), stood the strongest of Hebrew fortresses. Perched a thousand feet in air, built of black basalt, and fully half a mile in circuit, surrounded by an outer town of considerable importance, this remarkable fortification was as a beacon above the lake and to the country round, and was believed by all Palestine to be absolutely impregnable. Its terrible capture by the victorious Titus, in the year 69, is one of the bloodiest chapters in the story of that bloody conquest of a frantic people.

It was in this citadel that, at the time of our story, the troops of the Antipas were quartered. Marching up from Bostra in the southeast came the straggling soldiers of the 'Aretas. Just beyond the confines of Roman territory and Jewish province the Arabian army had gathered, and was now encamped on the fertile plain that stretches away from beneath the "Camel's Hump" to the hills of the Trachonitis and the wildernesses of the Hauran.

In the tent of the Prince Maliku, the commander of the invading Arabs, was Bar-Asha. The old 'Aretas

did not himself lead out his forces. "Let the lion's whelp crush out the curs," he said. "The lion needs not to fight with the fox." And his son, the Prince Maliku, was alike a shrewd and brave young leader. Though he felt fully equal to cope with Herod's army—which the Antipas himself did not lead, being safely housed in his palace at Tiberias, across the lake—he was still studying how best to draw his foemen out and away from the fortress on the hill-top, so that he might encompass and give them battle.

And as he sat thus in council with his chief captains, the curtains of the tent were thrust aside and a guard, entering, said: "Behold, prince, there stands one without, a Jew, who would have speech with him whom men call the son of Asha." Bar-Asha, hurrying out, found himself confronted by one closely shrouded in the ample robe of the Hebrews. The stranger threw back the folds of the *keffyeh* from his head and stood uncovered. It was Juda Bar-Simon, the knifeman.

"So, son of Asha," he said, "do not my words by the Wells of Harod come to truth? You are, even now, as a prince—a great one among the captains of the stranger. I have that to show you shall bring you glorious victory and make you, as I prophesied, a prince indeed among your own."

"Speak on," Bar-Asha said.

"I am from Gamala," Bar-Simon proceeded. "In the citadel of the Antipas, beside his own troops—Gentiles from the farther west—are certain of my own countrymen. They are fugitives from the tetrarchy of Philip—zealots, knifemen, Gaulonites, sworn foes to the Antipas and to the name of Herod. They are ready at

your bidding to turn their spears against their comrades. On the morrow Herod's army of near six thousand men will descend to the plain and give the 'Aretas battle. My countrymen await but the signal to come over to you, and, under your lead, to turn the victory youward. What shall that signal be?"

Bar-Asha paused in thought. "I have it," he said at last; "the standard of Issachar! My only belonging—for I have neither troop nor company in all the army of the 'Aretas, but fight as a free spearman—my only belonging is the topaz banner of the Sons of Issachar that hath been embroidered for my use when I shall be prince indeed. This, at a given time, I will display upon a height toward the weakest side of Herod's host. When your countrymen see that unfurled, let it be to them the sign to come over to us, and turning their spears against the men of Herod, smite them hip and thigh."

"'T is well and wise," Bar-Simon replied. "It shall be even as you advise. Farewell; I go to tell my brethren and then to join the Master."

"But tell me, O son of Simon, tell me of the Master—of Messias," Bar-Asha cried. "What does he? How fares he now?"

"As of old—teaching, healing, wandering; followed by great throngs of people, working toward his own in his own peculiar fashion. Only this he says, that we may take as tidings of victory. He saith that he must die, that even in the hour of his triumph, the chief priests and scribes of our people will compass his death. But this I heard him add, and on this hope do I build: There be some standing here that shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

His kingdom, mark you. What this meaneth I cannot fathom. It doth presume great things—wonders, miracles, strange sights, battles, and victories, perhaps—for he doth talk of dying and then of coming to life again. So, son of Asha, live and trust. The kingdom will come in power. Messias shall triumph gloriously. Farewell. I shall yet see you in princely power within the palaces at Jerusalem." And with these words he was gone. "Die and yet live again to reign over his kingdom!" Bar-Asha, musing, said. "Truly is our king God-given; truly his deeds are marvellous and his ways past finding out."

The morning sun had scarcely climbed the eastern sky to a level with the battlements of Gamala's frowning fortress when, down from that grim citadel on the "Camel's Hump," came the army of Herod. Foreign mercenaries mostly—Thracian, German, and Gallic soldiers, drawn from the armies of Rome or from the refugee people of the cities of the Gentiles,—they were equipped in Roman fashion and marched according to Roman tactics. The camp of the Arabians, too, was in motion. The bowmen, the spearmen, and slingers of the host spread across the plain, while a dark mass of cavalry, armed with the long lance of the East, led the wavering centre, or hovered on the extended flanks.

The battle was quickly joined. In attack and retreat, in rapid dash and brief but sudden charge, with flights of arrows and of stones, with long, shrill battle-cries, with clash of spears and all the clangor and the stratagem of Eastern war the conflict raged; and still the serried ranks of Herod's hireling host stood firm; to neither side came a lasting advantage.

It was Bar-Asha's first taste of war. He was full of

the excitement of the moment, burning with desire to do some great and notable deed. Brave, determined, hopeful, and alert, he fought by the side of the Prince Maliku, and gained that leader's favor by his ready valor.

But as the battle still hung undecided, Bar-Asha said: "May I try, O prince, one little sally of my own at yonder point on the right? There the line of the Antipas seemeth most weak, and there, if we can compass their array, we may close about and crush them."

And Prince Maliku said: "Try it, O friend; but draw not too many of my followers off. I need them here to bear the heat of battle at its stoutest point."

"I ask not one of your followers," Bar-Asha said; "only my fleet steed, my own good sword, and a horseman's lance." And even while Prince Maliku stood amazed at the bold announcement, Bar-Asha rode away.

Where, toward the Jordan side, a little hillock lifted itself from the plain, Bar-Asha reined in his steed. Then drawing from beneath his breastplate a broidered pennant formed of topaz-colored silk, he fastened it to the lance-head and held it high in air.

"Ho, men of Israel; ye who hate the Herod, rally here!" he shouted with all the power of his strong young voice.

There was a sudden stir in Herod's ranks. As if to cut this daring horseman down, five hundred of the "fugitive" fighters in the tetrarch's army dashed toward the hillock. They swarmed about the standard.

"Hail, son of Asha!" they cried. "Hail to the topaz standard! We follow where you lead!"

"Upon them, then; death to the tyrant's host!" And, with the topaz standard fluttering above his head,

Bar-Asha led the deserters straight against their former comrades.

Taken utterly by surprise, compassed on all sides (for at this sudden move Prince Maliku spurred his own army to a fresh assault), the mercenaries of the tetrarch turned to flight. But no flight was possible. On every side their enemies pressed them about. They threw down their arms; they raised the cry for quarter. But the terrible shout: "No mercy to the hirelings of Herod!" met their pleas for life.

Then, in the very crisis of the tumult, a woman's figure, mounted on a fleet camel, burst from the Arabian tents. Straight into the thick of the fight she dashed. It was the Princess Amina. Thus ever, in those early days, among the warrior tribes of the East, did the woman who, deeming herself insulted, had provoked her kinsmen to the strife, ride into the heat of battle, declaiming her woes, singing a wild song of war, urging her people to revenge her wrongs. And thus Amina rode.

"Brothers," she cried to the victorious Arabians, "I call for vengeance—for vengeance on the false Herod. Death to the followers of him who worked your princess ill. Let not one of the craven foe escape!"

With bitter force the soldiers of the 'Aretas and the deserters who rallied about Bar-Asha flung themselves on that panic-stricken foe. Spear and sword did their cruel work. As Josephus tells us: "All Herod's army was destroyed." And above the carnage still fluttered the topaz pennant; in the midst of the slaughter still, upon the royal camel, rode the Princess Amina.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RENDEZVOUS OF THE KNIFEMEN.

THE battle beneath Gamala was ended. The army of the 'Aretas, victorious in the fight, had returned across the borders of the Nabatæan kingdom. In Tiberias, Herod Antipas, raging over his defeat, had despatched a long wail and an appeal for "justice" to the emperor, his master, in Rome. Bar-Asha, the hero of the battle, honored with the friendship and gifts of the Arabian king, had parted with Amina at the palace in the Red City and started on his quest for fortune.

"Return with wealth, my prince," the princess had said to him, "and I will be yours indeed. Seek out and secure the alliance of your wonderful Messias, and, together, will we work out the disgrace of the Antipas, the spoiling of Rome, the deliverance of Israel, the foundation of the new kingdom of the Jews. The treasures of Gerizim shall be the corner-stone of our fortunes and our might."

Thus proud in the knowledge of his rising importance, charged with a task which was to end in the wealth that to him meant worldly power, hopeful of the future, anxious to win applause and aid from Messias, Bar-Asha took his westward way from Petra. The deserters, by whose aid he had won the day at Gamala, had disap-

peared ; but in their hatred of Herod he read the way of help ; with them at his back he hoped to offer both practical and substantial aid when Messias should see fit to proclaim his greater power and strike the final blow at Rome. But when, the enthusiast queried, was this to be ? When would the Master, desisting from his teaching and healing, exchange the rabbi for the soldier, the preacher for the prince ? Only let him make a move in this direction and Bar-Asha's sword, Bar-Asha's life, were at his service.

It was in this spirit that Bar-Asha took his westward way toward Judea. Only one thought troubled him. Gerizim was in Samaria—in the very heart of that despised section that cut in twain the real home of the Jew. The touch of Samaria was pollution. Would the treasure he was to find likewise be pollution ? Would it be a crime against the teachings of the Law to use it for the triumph of the Law ? But wealth, however attained, meant power ; and Bar-Asha was no ridiculous Essene to hold contempt for wealth. He at least would strive to obtain it, and answer or silence his scruples when once treasure and fortune were within his grasp.

Thus musing he neared the grim towers of Machærus —that " Black Fortress " of Southern Palestine where the Baptist had been beheaded, and about whose dismal walls hung so many stories of Herodian treachery and Herodian hate. And, almost in the shadow of that grimmest palace of Herod Antipas, he was met by two travellers journeying toward the border.

The *shalom !* of greeting was exchanged, and then, ere they could pass one another, Bar-Asha heard the question : " Come you from the Arabian borders, friend ? "

"Ay," Bar-Asha replied.

"Even from the Red City?"

"Even from Petra the Red."

"Tell us, then; heard you there whether one whom men call the son of Asha, of the clan of Issachar, was in the palace of the 'Aretas?"

"He was when I left," Bar-Asha replied, guardedly.

"And he left when you did, perhaps?" came the equally cautious inquiry. Bar-Asha met the question with a lifting of the eyebrows, but made no reply.

"From the description given unto us by Juda Bar-Simon, you should be even that Bar-Asha whom we do seek."

"What signs show you to prove you friends of Bar-Simon?" Bar-Asha asked. The stranger lifted the folds of his ample *simlah*, and significantly disclosed the ornamented dagger handle thrust beneath his girdle.

"Ye are knifemen," Bar-Asha exclaimed.

"Ay; and you are the son of Asha?"

"The same. Behold the topaz standard." And Bar-Asha drew from beneath the folds of his robe the topaz pennant that had brought victory at Gamala.

"Bar-Simon sends you greeting. He bids you, if you would hear important tidings, to meet him even now where he awaits you in the Engedi, at the Fountain of the Kid."

Turning aside from the way toward Machærus, the travellers skirted the sombre shores of the Dead Sea and, late at night, they came to the gates of the monastery of the Essenes in the fertile oasis of Engedi—that stretch of verdure flanked by limestone precipices, where, on the western shore of the grim Sea of Salt, had been es-

tablished the chief seat of the Essenes, "the first hermits of Palestine." And here Bar-Asha met the Gaulonite.

"Peace to you, my brother; peace and glory!" was the greeting of Bar-Simon. "Doth not my promise still work grandly out toward its fulfilling? You are victor over your enemy. Behold; another step toward power is yours! Follow me and learn of yet another."

"How? Is Messias here?"

"Not here. The Master still says naught of such matters as we hold close to heart. But patience—patience! Work we our own ways toward victory till he shall see fit to speak."

"What then would you show me?"

"Come and see."

Full of wonder and yet little doubting, since from his first step toward fortune this mysterious Zealot had been both an inspiring and a successful adviser, Bar-Asha followed his friend. A half-mile from the Essene monastery, at the very edge of the oasis and where the sharp limestone precipices that fill the desert plain of the Arabah begin to replace the verdure of Engedi, Bar-Asha discovered certain moving forms. To the challenge of these sentries, Bar-Simon returned the ready password and, leading his companion through a tortuous defile, brought him at last into a rocky amphitheatre. Here a welcome fire smouldered, for the night was cool, and about the fire were grouped some half a hundred men or more. These were the knifemen—members all of that singular group of outlawed and fanatical patriots—"pious brigands," Mommsen rightly calls them—who had but this one simple creed: "God alone is Lord; death is indifferent; freedom is all in all!" And to ob-

tain that freedom the knife was the ever-ready instrument. Whosoever stood in the way, be he friend or foe, Roman, Idumean, Galilean, or Jew, could hope for no mercy at the hands of these "followers of the knife."

"Brothers," Bar-Simon said, "I bring you the leader—Bar-Asha of the topaz standard, that gallant Prince of Issachar whose arm you so stoutly upheld beneath the Hump of the Camel."

Ready hands stirred up the smouldering brands, and a sudden flare lighted up the grim solitude of those limestone rocks. The shout of greeting burst from every throat: "*Shalom*, Bar-Asha! Welcome, prince and captain! What would he with us now?"

"Listen!" Bar-Simon placed a hand upon the young man's shoulder. "Here, son of Asha, are the chief of those who rallied about you at Gamala. With these did you pierce the lines of Antipas. By their valor did you overthrow his arms. They are pledged to Herod's downfall. So are you. They wait the rising of Messias. So do you. They are ready to serve you well. Be guided by me. The times are ripe. Not Juda the Gaulonite, nor the shepherd Simon, had so glorious a chance for triumph and for fame. Within the Circle of the Gentiles Messias waits the day that shall be his opportunity. I go to him to watch his actions and, when the hour has come, to offer him a kingdom and a crown. That hour depends on you, O friend; on you, victorious son of Asha."

"What would you have of me?" Bar-Asha asked.

"This—and this only—leadership! These, our friends, shall, separating themselves, travel even as do I, throughout the length and breadth of Israel, gaining recruits for

Messias. Quietly, so as not to arouse the suspicions of the Antipas—cautiously, that they awaken not the power of Rome, they shall work among the farmers of Esdraelon, the mountaineers of Galilee, the fighting folk of Judah, to win them to our cause. And, when the time is ripe, our signal-fires alight on Carmel and on Hermon, on Tabor and on Horeb, shall tell that the hour to strike has come at last. Warned by these signals our hosts shall gather on Esdraelon's plain, march on Tiberias to the overthrow of Herod, and you shall be our leader. The hero of Gamala shall lead our revolt, the gallant Prince of Issachar shall be Messias' strong right arm. Thus shall the flaming sword be unsheathed ; the spear of relentless war be laid in rest. Then, gathering strength even as does Jordan-water in the month of Adar, we will go in triumph to Jerusalem, where Messias himself shall head our war. Rome shall be driven from the land. The Holy City shall be ours ; and, anointed King of the Jews in the mighty temple, there shall Messias reign in Herod's palace—king over all Israel. Our triumph shall be complete. Shall it not be so, my brothers ?"

"It shall be so !" The shout of approval rang through the encircling rocks and awoke the wild goat in its cave. "The son of Simon counsels well."

"And when shall the signal burn ?" Bar-Asha asked.

"Patience, brother," Bar-Simon said. "So great a rising calls for time and care. Give us three moons at least and the hill-tops of Israel shall blaze as does the day. Once let our friends report the people ready and the hour of our salvation is at hand. Bide you where you will—in Nain, in Petra, in Jerusalem even—but be ever

ready, ever on the watch; and when our signal-fires blaze out, haste you to the Wells of Harod, where we first did meet. There will I join you, and together we will seek the rallying-place of the freemen of Israel."

"But not in idleness will I wait that blessed day, O brothers," Bar-Asha cried, his face aglow in the flickering fire-light with ardor and excitement. "I have that to do shall bring strength to our cause and power to our arm. When the signal comes to strike for Israel the son of Asha will be doubly ready. You, who fought so valiantly at Gamala around the topaz standard of Issachar, shall once again fight with me for freedom from our tyrants, for salvation for Israel, for Messias our king!"

"Live the son of Asha! Live the Prince of Issachar!" cried the knifemen all. "Death to the Antipas; to Rome; to all the enemies of Israel and the Lord!"

So the rendezvous broke up. Bar-Asha next day was on his way toward the north. He would seek first for quiet and solitude at Nain, where he would mature his plans for his most difficult task—the search for the treasure of Gerizim. What this was to be, where and why hidden even, he was yet ignorant. But what matter so long as it did exist?—and this the mystic scroll, baffling and void of explanation though it was, clearly promised.

As he journeyed northward he soon came upon the main highway from Jerusalem. Streams of travellers, coming and going, thronged the well-paved road. Bar-Asha, no longer dressed in the rich robes of the palace of Petra, or in the war suit of Gamala, seemed but a simple traveller even as were those whom he met upon the way. He had passed the confines of Samaria; he

had looked with hope, mingled with no little anxiety, upon the temple-crowned crest of Gerizim, where lay securely locked the secret of his treasure-hunt; and as with quick steps he walked down the incline where the Samaritan Hills sloped to the Plain of Esdraelon, he came upon another traveller, walking yet more slowly, with face like his own turned to the north.

Bar-Asha gave the ready *shalom!* and received a grave: "Peace be with you!" in reply. The stranger's dress betokened the man of consequence in his own region, the fringed robe and *phylactery* of calf-skin speaking him as some well-to-do merchant and devout Israelite of the northern towns.

But the stranger's face wore a troubled look, and over it even as he spoke strong emotions played continually.

"Come you from the south, friend?" he asked as Bar-Asha accosted him with the customary trivialities of chance conversation.

"Ay, from the south," Bar-Asha replied.

"Even from Jerusalem?"

"No; from the borders of Arabia and beyond. And you?"

"I am from Jerusalem, even from the temple itself, where I sought the Sanhedrim for advice—sought and obtained it not. From Arabia, say you? And yet your speech would make you of the north."

"As I am," Bar-Asha replied. "I am of Nain."

"Of Nain? Then you must have heard of his doings; you may, perhaps, bear witness to his marvels and his speech."

"Of whom talk you?" Bar-Asha asked.

"Of him whom men call the Rabbi Jeshua."

"Messias?" The word leaped from Bar-Asha's lips before he could control his tongue.

"How! Messias, say you? Then you are of his following?"

"Yes and no," Bar-Asha replied. "I have seen—I have heard of this rabbi whom men do say may be Messias." Then, more cautiously: "What of him?"

"Oh, my friend," the stranger said, "I am full of doubt—of doubt and fear,—even of anger and pain. Listen. I am Jair the son of Pharez, a merchant of Chorazin. I have a daughter. A fair young girl, dear to me as my life—my daughter Adah. One day she sickened; and in distress at her pain, which no physician in Chorazin, which is my home, nor yet in Capernaum, nor even in Tiberias—city of the accursed!—could cure, I bethought me of this rabbi, rumors of whom and of whose wonderful deeds of healing had come to me. I sought him out. I implored him to save my child, but even as he came to my house the message reached me that my dear child was dead. And when I would have cried aloud in my grief and left him in the way the rabbi said: 'Fear not; believe only, and thy daughter shall be made whole.' And I—why, I know not—I believed that, even though she were dead, he might somehow help me. And when we were come to my house the sound of mourning rang through every room. But the rabbi said to those who grieved aloud: 'Weep not. She is not dead but sleepeth.' And they would have laughed him to scorn. But he sent from that chamber of death all, saving only me and the girl's mother. Then, taking my dead child, my little Adah, by the hand, he said to her simply: 'Maid, arise!' And, oh, wonderful to tell—though you

may believe it not—her spirit came again and she arose straightway! Dead, mark you—dead, she was alive again! Heard you ever aught like this?"

"Heard? Ay, friend, and was," Bar-Asha said, moved with a new wonder to hear of his own experience thus again repeated.

"Why, what mean you, friend? Your language is but riddle."

"I too was even as that little maid," Bar-Asha said. "I too lay dead upon the *mittah* in the gate of Nain. Messias looked upon me; Messias touched me; Messias said unto me: 'Young man, arise!' and lo!—like her—I am alive. Said I not aright? Is he not indeed Messias?"

The merchant of Chorazin, with eyes staring in wonder, heard the recital through. Then, flinging his arms about Bar-Asha's neck, he cried: "Now praised be the Lord of hosts! Glory and honor to his name who hath caused such great deeds to be done in his realm. My soul counselled me aright. Messias indeed has come!"

"And you?" Bar-Asha said. "What would you do for his glory; what toward his triumph?"

"Whatsoever he will," the grateful Jair replied. "He is my Lord—my leader and my king."

"King, say you?" Bar-Asha said. "Ah; you speak of what I and those with me would make a truth. See; I seek to make him such."

Then eloquently and with youthful fervor he unfolded the daring plan by which Messias' kingdom was to be established in the land. And because his new friend importuned him, and because he would gladly secure so valuable a recruit for Messias' service, and because just

now he desired to be among strangers rather than friends for the careful working out of his own plans, Bar-Asha avoided Nain. Not even turning aside to see his widowed mother, he went with Jair the son of Pharez, to the good merchant's own home in the Galilean city of Chorazin, where the northern hills of Naphtali slope downward to the sparkling Sea of Galilee.

"Look; there even now she comes—my daughter; my Adah and your sister in the strength of Messias' deliverance from death."

Thus the merchant of Chorazin cried as, drawing near to his own house, the two friends saw coming joyfully toward them the slender figure of a fair young girl.

"Father," she said, "you are well returned. Friend, you are welcome. Peace be to you both."

And thus the son of the widow of Nain met the daughter of Jairus.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

THERE is a kinship in strange experiences. The young man of Nain, the maiden of Chorazin, found themselves drawn into closest sympathy by the very isolation of their own marvellous happenings. Comradeship in the experiences of death must mean communion in the days of resurrection. How did you feel when Messias bade you live?—Ah, how did you? This was the basis of many a long conversation, of many a sympathetic conference.

And yet, so variable is the human heart, so diverse are its workings, that, while Bar-Asha found in the merchant of Chorazin, the *rosh*, or ruler of the city synagogue, a ready listener to his plans, a firm believer in Messias' temporal power, he could arouse in Adah, the good ruler's daughter, but little enthusiasm in his dream of glory. But, on the other hand, there shone from her eyes, and lived in all her speech, a firm and abiding faith in the spiritual might of the kingdom of her Lord.

"His kingdom is not of this world," the girl declared. "He is the son of God. What to him are the thrones, the principalities and powers of earth? The souls of men are his chiefest treasure. Thus he sayeth and to this end only doth he work. See! I have a vision of

his triumph—a triumph greater than any that you, my father, you, my brother, can conceive. A world redeemed from sin ; a King upon his throne—but not in Israel here, nor yet among the lands of the Gentiles. There, in the heavens beyond—there I see him reign. I see a Saviour of the world ; not alone of Jew and proselyte, but of the world ! even of those who, in their hardness of heart, in their blindness, and their stubbornness would refuse to be saved. O father mine, skilled in the ways of the Law and in the teachings of the synagogue ; O son of Asha, brought from death to life—are ye both so blind of eye, so hard of heart, so thrilled with dreams of paltry earthly grandeur that ye will not see what the Lord desires, that ye will not partake of this wondrous glory ? It is a glory greater than that of any prince in Israel, of any king of men, of any worldly power born only of scorn of Herod or hatred of Rome. 'Come unto me,' I heard Messias say. 'Come unto me, all ye who labor or are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Oh, let us go to him. He only hath the words of eternal life."

The face of this fair young girl, scarcely yet grown into the early womanhood of that Eastern land, seemed to glow as with a heavenly light ; her frail form, touched with the spell of her perfect faith, seemed almost transfigured before them. She spoke as one inspired. Upon them both fell something of the absolute trust that so glorified and irradiated the speaker. But her dream of unmaterial glory was more than they could fathom, more than they could comprehend. Of what worth to Israel could be such a master as was that one pictured by Adah's glowing faith—a victor whose conquests were to

be only in the souls of men, a prince whose dominions were but the impalpable regions of that far away and misty heaven which no one could understand, in which few even really believed? No, their Messias, their Master, must be one who could bring to the land of their fathers an even greater glory than it had known of old—dominion over all the sons of men, over all the lands of the earth; cities built of precious stones; gates of one glowing pearl; wealth and glory and power for Israel. This was their dream. Messias was to be a greater law-giver than Moses; a more victorious soldier than David; a richer, wiser, more magnificent king than Solomon.

And so, entering in no degree into the higher, more divine conceptions of this gentle girl, they held her to be only a womanly enthusiast, uplifted by the experiences through which she had passed, led away by her idealization of this wonderful rabbi who had given her life, who had tuned her lips to praise, and filled her soul with a faith that was all the more impossible because of its soarings into the unknown.

While man has lived and woman held her sway, the world has ever been the same. Not six thousand, nor sixty thousand years of existence, of revolution, of growth and varying seasons, have changed in any degree the one ruling attribute of the human heart—the power of love. This, swayed by circumstance, dominates circumstance still; this, fed by its environments, is still the motive of that very environment that gives it strength. It triumphs alike over dissimilar conditions, over all inequalities of birth or station, over differences of faith and the antagonisms of sections. But, conqueror though it is, none the less is it the slave of association, the creature of that

little world which only holds a census-roll of two, whose horizon is bounded by the circle of two trusting hearts. And, strong as death, it is still unstable as water, allured by new associations, loyal only as the bonds of memory or the powers of resistance are strong.

So it came to pass that in these hours of communion and even of difference, the hearts of these two—whose experiences had been so identical, but whose desires had led them into opposite beliefs and into hopes almost antagonistic—grew into that sympathy of interest where one would seek to draw the other to his enthusiasm or to her unwavering faith—seek, yet may not, and, seeking, learn, each, to give and take a heart.

Bar-Asha found in the companionship of this fair young girl that which gave to his soul a peace and restfulness that as yet he had not known. She awakened in him an interest that interrupted for the instant even his cherished quest on Gerizim, that dulled his more sordid desires for wealth and power, that even turned his heart away from thoughts of the Princess Amina and his pledge to her. The gentle voice, the sympathetic word, the look of unconcealed affection and of innocent delight—these are often more powerful to win the heart of man than all the wiles of more artful women of the world, than all the snares of the unnatural life of courts.

If Amina the princess would hold her "Prince of Issachar" to his pledge, if she still desires the power-giving treasures she has bade him seek, it were well that she should speedily separate him from the sweet companionship and gentler ways of this loving, tender girl of Chorazin. The confidences of cool retreats, the low-spoken avowals of that screened and shaded housetop

beneath soft Syrian skies, can, with susceptible young hearts, lead but to one result. It is difficult to know, sang Longfellow, at what moment love begins; it is less difficult to know that it has begun—and to one of these critical moments of life had Adah and Cheliel nearly attained.

"Liveth one here whom men call Jairus the merchant?" The inquiry, loudly spoken one day in the street below, reached even to the ears of the three who were gathered beneath the outstretched awnings of the roof garden of Jair of Chorazin. The speech, the tone, the short, decisive manner, marked the Roman. Jair hurried down. A light-armed spearman of the Roman guard waited before the door.

"I am that man," the Hebrew made reply.

"Vettius, the centurion, stationed at Capernaum, sends you greeting. You have a daughter."

"Ay, what of her?" The query came sternly, yet with all the anxiety of suspicion, from the father's lips. He knew too well the wicked ways of Rome.

"Vettius, the centurion, hath heard that she hath been restored to health—even, so some do say, from death itself—by a certain Nazarene physician who hath wondrous ways of healing. Vettius hath a favorite servant, a spearman of his guard, Macrinus by name, long his companion in arms, who lieth at the point of death. He would know of this Nazarene, this healer. Might one see the maiden?"

"Surely, friend," the much-relieved merchant replied. "Since you come in peace and in distress, you shall see the maiden whose life has been so wonderfully given back to her and us. For yourself and for your master shall you judge of this rabbi's skill."

Up to the house-top they mounted. Bar-Asha had caught the name. Vettius! he mused, wondering; my enemy and captor of old! He must not know of me. I have work to do that is far too great to be marred by the meddling of Rome. And, drawing apart from the others, with his face partially concealed in his mantle, he awaited the meeting.

"This is my daughter," Jair the son of Pharez announced.

The Roman made but a brief obeisance. "Hail, maiden," he said. "Vettius, the centurion in Capernaum, bade me look on you and ask of your father or your household—even, perhaps, of yourself, of this Nazarene physician who hath delivered you from some sore spell of sickness."

"Ay, even from death itself, good Roman," Adah replied.

"From seeming death, perhaps," the soldier admitted, in stolid unbelief. "No man liveth who can call back the dead. Even the gods do not that for mortals."

"Nay, not your gods of fable and of mist," said the young girl. "But God himself, the One and Only God, He has sent to earth one who can do this godlike miracle."

"I come not here to reason this with you," the messenger replied. "I do but look to see, for Vettius my captain, that you are indeed restored to health, and to ask where he may find this skilful rabbi, that he may send to him and ask his help for our sick comrade, Macrinus."

"Macrinus! So; he, too?" Bar-Asha muttered.

"The Rabbi Jeshua—the Lord himself—is even now at

Bethsaida," Adah said. "Let the centurion seek him there, or on the highway to Capernaum, and perchance his servant may be healed."

"I thank you ; Vettius would thank you. It is well," the messenger replied, and turned to leave the house-top.

"Yet, stay, good Roman," and the girl held out a hand as if to restrain him yet a while. "Believeth your master that the Rabbi Jeshua can do this thing for him ?"

"Ay, since he hath done yet more for you. The centurion Vettius is friendly to you Israelites. He hath even helped largely toward a synagogue for your people at Capernaum, and, since he liveth there, doth deal with the townsfolk gently and justly. Why should not this doctor, this rabbi, as you call him, do well for one who is a friend of your people ?"

"Messias doeth mercy unto all," Adah replied ; "Jew or Gentile, it mattereth not to him. He doth but ask for faith in him and his gifts are then both free and gracious. But tell your master this : the Lord Messias—he whom men yet call only the Rabbi Jeshua—is more than doctor, more than rabbi. He is the friend of all mankind. And they who seek him, nothing doubting, shall see and may taste of the salvation from on high. What the gods of Rome could never grant—what all the wealth of all your empire could not purchase—he giveth freely, giveth gladly. Oh, be moved by him, good Roman, to be more friendly to your fellow-men ; for all are sons of God ; all ye are brethren. Rome shall yet see the wonders of our king. Rome shall yet acknowledge the sovereign power of our Lord Messias."

"I know nothing of all this, maiden," the Roman said. "Neither may I take a lesson in treason from your lips.

I know but one master, but one king—our Lord the Emperor. Rome can have no fear of any wandering doctor of the Jews skilled in the healing art. But even his service may be secured for a soldier of the empire. And this Vettius seeks. This he will have. Again I thank you. Farewell. I bear your words to my captain, and bid him seek this rabbi in Bethsaida. Macrinus yet may live. Jairus, peace be with you. For this meeting and for these tidings of the man we seek, Vettius thanks you. Fare you well."

And with heavy tread, descending the narrow stair, the soldier hastened to the street and hurried off with his tidings to where, in Capernaum, two good miles away, his commander impatiently awaited his return.

CHAPTER XVI.

VETTIUS ONCE MORE.

VETTIUS the centurion had achieved his desire. Wearied with the many removals from one post to another that fill the soldier's life, he had long looked forward to attaining a position of authority which might secure for him a permanent location in some important town. In such a post he could only hope to find the ease that, so he deemed, long years of campaigning had made his due. Detailed at last as head of the Roman garrison in Capernaum—a town of no little importance on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee,—he had settled down into a life of routine, but one of comparative quiet, giving the promise of rest and permanence.

For all his rough experiences and harsh soldier ways, Vettius the centurion was a good-hearted man. He saw the wisdom of putting himself on the best of terms with those among whom his lot had been cast ; and he had proved himself in many ways just, lenient, helpful, and friendly to the townspeople of this Galilean city. He had assisted them in building a synagogue, knowing that in all lands, as in all ages, the most direct way to our neighbor's friendship is to help his church. He had also the dominant Roman spirit that saw in the building of a

shrine to the gods at once a penance for past misdeeds and a bid for future blessings.

But his trusted Macrinus, boldest and worthiest of all his soldiers, had fallen dangerously ill. Even now was the stout spearman sick unto death ; the pain of an acute palsy was fast benumbing his senses and sapping his vigor and his life. Not all the medicines in the chest of the garrison could afford him relief

Rumors of a wandering Jewish doctor who had performed some wonderful deeds of healing had reached the ears of Vettius. He determined to seek out this good physician, and make one last attempt to save his dying comrade. Hence the message to the merchant of Chorazin, in whose family, so it had been noised abroad, this doctor had wrought a mighty cure.

The reply of his messenger came to the anxious centurion none too soon. Battling with a fell disease, the once sturdy strength of that tough old campaigner, Macrinus the spearman, was fast ebbing away ; his days of marching and of fighting seemed surely numbered. Grumbling much, even in his weakness, that he should die like a dog in a kennel, and not as became a true soldier of the emperor, with spear and shield in the very thick of the fight, Macrinus turned impatiently upon his bed and, driven quite at bay by his grinding pains, complained that even in a man's feebleness the gods were hard of heart, since they grudged to him even death as a release from pain.

"Well ?"—this to the returning messenger—"what of this maiden of Chorazin ; what answer do you bring ?" The centurion's question came quick and sharp as of one used to instant answers.

"What! dead—dead, you tell me, and brought back to life? And you saw this maiden and can trust your eyes? Why, this is wondrous news. Macrinus; Macrinus, old comrade! do you hear? You shall yet be cured; you shall be among us once again. Do you hear, you surly old bear, do you hear these glorious tidings?" And the delighted Vettius, in his excess of joy, very nearly clapped his dying comrade on the back. "What, old doubter—it may be but a trick, you say?—no man can bring back the dead? Why, fellow, but he has; Horatius, here, hath seen the maiden, hath seen and had speech with her: Of course you can—you shall be healed. But who can this man be? Have the gods in very deed come down to earth? Is this, think you, Mercury's self in human form, or some rare messenger from high Olympus? Or is it, perhaps, one of those mystic prophets of these curious Jews, of whom their Law doth tell us—Elisha or Elijah or some old patriarch, perchance? Here then is no place for such as he. A barrack-room, a soldier's quarters—this surely is no fit place for a great messenger of the immortal gods to come. Go you to him, Horatius; take a dozen men if need be, and go to him straight. Tell him Vettius the Roman demands his skill. Nay, go not in warlike guise. Go rather and ask it as a boon for me, your captain; beseech this Being—whosoever he is—to speak but the word of healing only and all may be well. Or no, better that I go to him myself. Where is he, say you—at Bethsaida and cometh even now toward Capernaum? My cloak, Horatius! So; my staff. Good heart, Macrinus; good trust, old friend. I will bring your healing hither when I do return." And all in haste, yet nothing doubting, full of

growing faith, the hopeful centurion hurried from the bedside of his dying comrade.

Drawn by the same impulse of faith—tinged with an even higher desire—Bar-Asha, too, had, with Adah and her father, left the house at Chorazin for the highway that ran from Capernaum to Bethsaida. Here was the chance at last to witness Messias' power, at least to gain the sight of him Bar-Asha so long had sought. Would this heaven-sent King of the Jews stretch out his hand to save a soldier of the tyrant power that had enslaved his people? Was his help to be extended to the Gentiles too? Adah said yes; but Bar-Asha indignantly declared that only the elect could eat at the Master's table.

Where the broad highway, turning from the new Bethsaida, touched the northern shore of that ever-beautiful "lake of the harp"—that basalt-circled, flower-bordered Sea of Galilee—the Centurion Vettius, hastening from Capernaum, noted a thronging mass of people. "See, Horatius," he said, "that must be the rabbi—the Master, as some do call him. Whatever else he be, he is surely lord over pain and death, and as to such an one I will go to him, suing for the healing of our dying comrade."

The throng comes slowly on. Awe, curiosity, idle speculation, scoffing, doubt, and full belief, all find a place therein, as men and women watch the motions or crowd nearer to catch the slightest word that falls from the lips of him who walks central in the throng.

Only that morning, so the people said, had this wonderful rabbi given sight to a blind man in Bethsaida; scarcely a mile back, upon the highway, he had but just now cured a leper, standing alone in the awful circle of the solitude of pollution. What might not such a one as this do for Israel?

Nothing doubting, Vettius drew near. All the more closely, now, he marked that central figure upon whom all eyes were fastened, around whom all eagerly pressed, yet whom no one dared to touch. Even his Roman haughtiness yielded to the spell of the moment.

What he saw, what Bar-Asha saw—with eyes only for the one he hoped to hail as king—was a slight, trim figure, with clear-cut face, smooth, even forehead, wonderful eyes and soft, wine-colored hair and beard; a figure dressed in the plain garments of a wandering teacher, travel-stained and with no suggestion of kingly raiment in their material or their make; a face full of tenderness and pity toward mankind, but one the strong markings of which showed ability to command as well as counsel, to reprove as well as help.

Vettius stretched out beseeching hands. "Excellent rabbi—Lord!" he said; "my servant, my faithful comrade Macrinus the spearman lieth in my home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. Heal him, Lord, I pray, and I will be your debtor."

The reply came freely, without a tinge of patronage, without a gleam of Jewish exclusiveness. "I will come and heal him."

"Nay, but, Lord, know this," Vettius made answer, with a certain shade of embarrassment; "I am a soldier of Rome; I am not of your race or people. My house is but a barrack, my guest-chamber a guard-room. I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; for the soldier of Rome is not his own master. I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one: Go! and he goeth; to another: Come! and he cometh; and to my servant: Do this! and he doeth it. I would not say to you, O noble rabbi: Come! or

Go! I only plead for my comrade. Speak but the word of healing, Lord, and I know that Macrinus shall be healed. O Master, speak that word!"

At this speech, so full of mingled humility, manliness, and faith, a smile of ineffable tenderness and of gratitude for such unbounded trust lighted up the face of the wandering rabbi. Turning to those who followed him—the doubter, the scoffer, the critic, the vulgar curiosity seeker—he said: "Now, here is a marvellous thing. Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel! A Gentile, as you do call this stranger, hath more of trust, of unquestioning belief in me than any among you all. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out." Then, turning to Vettius, he said: "Go thy way, friend. Even so far as thou dost believe, be it done unto thee!"

Then, stepping into one of the numerous little fishing craft that were drawn up on the beach, the rabbi bade the men who sat therein, resting on their oars, watching him even as did all the others, push out into the lake. And so he left them.

Still, never doubting the result, Vettius the centurion turned joyfully toward his home. Through the city gate of Capernaum he hastened, and passed quickly on to his quarters. And lo! the first man to welcome him as he crossed the threshold was Macrinus himself—well, strong, and hearty once more, a look of puzzled and of baffling wonder speaking even through his welcoming eyes. And Vettius said: "Now, the gods be praised! Spoke I not the truth, old friend?"

But, as he turned toward those, who, curious as to the result of this word of the healer, had followed the centurion even to the very doors of the Roman garrison, Vettius started in amazement. For there, amid the throng, he recognized a face that he never could forget. It was the face of the man whom he had led to death—the Jewish captive, Bar-Asha of Nain; the one whom, months before, he had delivered over to the servants of the Antipas to be, as he well knew, tortured into some terrible death. Stepping quickly forward he laid a hand upon the young man's shoulder. "What, my prince of camel-drivers! Are you living yet?" he said.

CHAPTER XVII.

"CHOOSE YE."

BAR-ASHA would have shrunk away, but that he knew the power that lay behind the touch of Rome. He answered simply: "It is even I, good Vettius."

"And did Herod set you free? But no; Macrinus here did see you go to your death. Said you not so, Macrinus?"

"As plainly as ever I did see any one go down that same way into Pluto's dominions," Macrinus made answer. "And if I remember rightly, I did give our prince a fitting farewell."

"Then how is this, good friend?" the puzzled Vettius said. "Truly, the day is full of marvels. Did I not hear aright that Herod slew you?"

"You heard aright, noble Vettius," Bar-Asha replied; "Herod indeed did most foully slay me."

"And yet you live! Now, by the shield of Mars, but this is wondrous strange!! What—nay, tell me—whose work is this?"

"Even his who has brought Macrinus health. Messias gave me life."

"Messias! He?" and Vettius pointed off toward the lake.

"Even so," Bar-Asha answered. "That is Messias; that is my Lord and King."

"King, say you! Here! Come within. I would know more of this." And the astonished centurion drew his former captive within the garrison quarters, and bade the guards disperse the throng that lingered about the doors.

Long these two talked together—the Roman and the Jew. And, when Bar-Asha had told his wondrous story Vettius exclaimed:

"Nay; this is all more marvellous than I did dare to think. I cannot fathom it. And you do deem him—what?"

"Messias, surely—none other," Bar-Asha replied with confidence.

"Messias! That is the god-king so long expected by your nation, is it not?" the centurion inquired. "And why, then, should you deem a magical—nay, since you will, a heaven-sent physician—the king and conqueror that your prophets and your wise men have so long foretold?"

"Truly, good Vettius," Bar-Asha made answer, "I am not skilled in the law. I can give you no learned arguments to strengthen my belief. Only this I know—he is the Lord! My faith tells me so. My hope tells me so. His words tell me so. Did he not even now say of you that you had greater faith than had the children of the kingdom? And if we are these, doth not a kingdom imply a king? Doth it not assure us of his lordship and dominion? And yet again, I know it from the signs of the times. The day of the salvation of Israel is at hand."

Vettius glanced at him curiously. "Salvation from what?" he demanded.

Bar-Asha hesitated. Borne on by his own desires he had quite forgotten that this Vettius was a Roman. Had he admitted too much?

"Salvation from the ills our people labor under," he said at last; "from selfish leaders and false prophets; from forms that deaden and warring faiths that kill; from the injustice of the world; from the mire into which all Israel is sunken, and the jealousies from which we should be free."

"If any one could do this," said the centurion musingly, "surely this great rabbi is the man. He who can heal the sufferer with a word and raise the dead with a touch should be able to heal this suffering nation of the Jews, to raise it with a touch from death to duty."

"Say you this?" Bar-Asha exclaimed. "Then you do believe on him?"

"Believe? Ay, truly. Why should I not? If ever the gods descend to earth, as Rome's old faith has taught, then has a god come down to Israel this day."

"And you would do much to succor such a one?" Bar-Asha breathlessly inquired. "You would give to him your counsel, your support, your deathless devotion even?"

"All this; ay, more," Vettius, with enthusiasm, declared. "For such a helper of man, for such a godlike presence on the earth I would give all that he might demand, all that heart could prompt, that power or will could do."

"Runs then your faith so strong?" Bar-Asha cried with joy. "Then listen. You can serve the King. I said, but now, the day of Israel's salvation is at hand.

Messias declared of you—you heard him, did you not?—that many should come from the east and from the west to have part in his kingdom. Arabia is ready in the east. Rome, through such as you, is ready in the west. Join us; and by your own good sword and your warlike might help us to redeem our land from the tyranny of Herod and the galling chain of the Cæsars. Then, conqueror with us, have place, too, with us in the kingdom that Messias is to establish. Ah! what a kingdom that will be. Already I can see it all!" And on the young man's face flamed all the enthusiasm of his dream of glory. "Jerusalem shall be the city of our King. New-builded of gold, of cypress, and of cedar, its houses gleaming with precious stones, its walls unassailable, its gates set with priceless gems, all the kings of all the earth shall, before our gorgeous temple, do homage to the Jew. Our power shall be unconquerable; our peace eternal."

"But how know you," the centurion asked, the first flush of surprise shading down into a look of almost stolid inquiry, "how know you that your Messias is to do all this? Hath he himself promised it?"

"Scarcely in words as yet," Bar-Asha admitted. "But in a hopeful assurance, yes. So says Juda Bar-Simon."

"And who is Juda Bar-Simon?"

"One of Messias' own chosen followers. One of the twelve selected men who go about with the Master, working for his kingdom, waiting for his command to strike. A Gaulonite, a knifeman—an outlaw, if you please; but one of such power among his people that, at his word, the knifemen of Galilee and the outlaws of the hills will rise as one man and join in a resistless attack on Herod and on Rome."

"And is it then a rebellion against Rome that he would bring about?" Vettius, still with immovable face, inquired.

"Bar-Simon? Yes—all for Messias' sake. His plans are laid; his friends are ready. And when the time shall come, his beacon-fires alight on all our hills shall give the signal for our glorious rising. The blow shall fall—swiftly, suddenly, irresistibly. Herod shall be overthrown, Rome driven from the land, and Messias, in triumph, be set upon his throne."

"And where is this Bar-Simon," the centurion asked. "I would see—I would take counsel with him. Here is a valorous scheme."

"He follows in Messias' train," Bar-Asha replied. "Wherever the Master labors there are you certain at some time to find Bar-Simon. Gain but speech of him in my name, and you may learn all these plans for yourself. Give him the promise of your aid, and he will show you how best it may be turned toward Messias' cause."

Thus long they talked. And in all the ardor of his unquestioning faith, in all the enthusiasm of his one absorbing purpose, Bar-Asha, welcoming so important and so unexpected a proselyte, had at last confided to a centurion of Rome all the plans for action that Bar-Simon had matured and that he had entered into. And when at last they separated, clasping hands as those of comrades and of brothers in endeavor, they pledged themselves to the bringing in of Messias.

But, when Vettius was alone once more, there fought within his mind for the mastery the conflicting forces of desire and duty.

These be grave tidings, he mused. What is my duty?

I love this man, whose wonderful gifts I have seen and tested. I would do much to help him. God-sent he surely is. But is this plan to make him king of all the Jews of his own or their devising? I deem it rather theirs than his. His look, his acts, his speech, gave no such thought to me. He is a great healer, a mighty teacher; but he is no soldier, no conqueror, no king. These eastern folk of Palestine are ever full of scheme and plot. Hot-headed all, they would bend any new power that rises among them to their own foolish idea of deliverance. These knifemen are but dangerous outlaws. I know them well of old. They are faithful to naught but their own rebellious plans, hostile to Herod, hostile, too, to Rome. Ought I, knowing this, now let them work their will? I revere Messias, as they call him. But I have no king save our lord the Emperor. What is my duty? To thwart these rebellious plans would save from false friends, from hazard, and from ruin, this rabbi whom I so revere. Is not this my wisest succor, my most helpful aid? This Bar-Simon once removed and punished, the plot against Rome would fall; the power of the empire in this land would be strengthened; this young friend of mine (this Bar-Asha of Nain, whom, though so visionary and full of fire, I do yet love passing well) would find his head saved a second time from the halter or the cross; and best of all, this good man, this Rabbi Jeshua, would be left free to work out his own great plan of helping his people and making them firmer vassals of Rome. I will do it. I will apprehend this Bar-Simon. I will charge him with treason against the emperor and have him flung, without mercy, to the lions. Thus will this good rabbi be saved from pain and ruin;

this hot-brained enthusiast, Bar-Asha, whom in friendship, I would serve, shall be snatched from an act of treason and its fate; a plot which has not yet found chance for ripening shall be crushed in time—and all by the sacrifice of but one man. I will do it.

That very night the trusted spearmen of the centurion were speeding to the north and east, charged with the quiet apprehension and capture of Juda Bar-Simon the knifeman.

So skilfully, so silently, so zealously did they work that where, beyond the lake, the Master with his little band taught, fed, and healed the throngs that crowded ever about him, Juda Bar-Simon, the treasurer of the twelve—"he who bore the bag,"—was found apart from the others in the hills beyond Bethsaida. There was he taken, and ere the next day's noon had grown to night, he was brought a prisoner into the guard-room of Vettius the centurion, in Capernaum.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BAR-ASHA'S DUTY.

HIGH noon blazed down upon Chorazin. The fiery eye of an Oriental sun kept all life behind closed doors. The fountain in the little inner court within the house of Jair, the excellent merchant, trickled musically. The raised *leewan* beneath the screened veranda was strewn with rugs and cushions of Eastern workmanship, inviting to repose.

But Cheliel the son of Asha could not sleep. He had no desire for repose. He was too full of happy thoughts, of ardent hopes, of wonderful speculations. He had gained two most important recruits for Messias' cause: wealth, in the person of the merchant at Chorazin; power, in the arm of a centurion of Rome. But one other thing gave him cause for even deeper thought. He had seen the Lord. Was he satisfied with his appearance? Did he recognize in him Messias—the long-expected king?

Perhaps he hardly knew. The contact which comes to supersede conjecture is often a disenchantment. The face, the form, the voice of the wanderer to whom Bar-Asha had pledged his life, all inspired him with respect, veneration, love. But the royal look, the regal figure, the kingly show of power—these certainly had not

appeared in this travel-stained rabbi, who, with a word spoken at the lake-side, had cured the sick Macrinus, chafing behind the walls of Capernaum. The soul of Bar-Asha was in conflict.

And Adah, daughter of Jair, courted repose no more than did her father's guest. But she, rich in faith, was troubled neither by doubt nor question in her soul. Each new appearance of her Lord made her more and more an ardent believer. Reclining on the cushions of that shaded *leewan*, she watched Bar-Asha's changing face and anxiously sought to read his thoughts or, by her own gentle words, to turn his wandering fancies for a warlike leader into faith in a new evangel.

And as, thus watching, she seemed to trace in the fitful changes that played over her companion's features a doubt that needed strengthening, an unformed impression that might mean either faith or fear, her hand caught up the daintily-made *kinnor*, or harp of fir-wood, that lay at her feet. Then, deftly picking its strings with the ivory *plectra* fitted to her fingers, she sang in the sweetly-modulated voice that had grown so attractive to the son of Asha, this—the triumph-song of the first Christian maiden :

" O Thou, whose light in olden days
Our fathers' feet to freedom led,
Flood with Thy glory-giving rays
The mightier path our Lord doth tread.

" Proclaimed of prophet, seen of seer,
Yet not in wrath, Messias rides ;
Not flash of sword, nor glint of spear,
Nor trail of blood our Hero guides.

" His touch is life, his word is truth,
His message : Faith ; his mission : Peace ;
Nor will he rest till wrong and ruth,
And sin and strife and hate shall cease.

" His kingdom in the heart of man ;
His standard : Grace ; his watchword : Love,
Hope rides forever in the van,
And victory leads to God above.

" Haste, Judah ! seek his sov'reign grace ;
Up, Israel ! 'round his standard cling ;
Give to the son of David—place !
Shout glad Hosannas to our king !

" O Thou, whose light in olden days
Our fathers' feet to freedom led,
Incline our hearts, incite our praise
To hail him Leader, Lord, and Head ! "

Youth is ever hopeful. Adah was sure of the future. So, indeed, was Cheliël, though in a different way. And even as the young girl sang of that kingdom of love which this newly-come Messias was to bring into the world, Bar-Asha, too, as wedded to an ideal as was she was dreaming of a kingdom far different from that the pure and gentle-minded Adah sang. His dream was of a kingdom won by sword and spear—a kingdom in which love indeed should have place, but it was a love shrined in palaces and hedged about with all the glories that attend on power—the love of a prince in Israel for one who should be his princess. And should that princess be a stranger, an Arabian, regal, imperious, beautiful, and full of all alluring ways ; or a fair young country-woman, in whom dwelt ever gentleness to soothe, purity

to influence, and affection to satisfy? Amina or Adah—which? Bar-Asha felt that when his day of power did really come his decision would be but a matter of choice—a choice of which he was to be the master. So arrogant is the assurance of young and conscious manhood.

The hours sped pleasantly on. The sweets and wine had been served and tasted and then, drawn out by hope quite as much as by desire, Bar-Asha, as the day turned toward sunset, left the house of his host, the merchant Jair, and walked downward toward Capernaum and the Galilean lake.

Avoiding the crowded city and still wandering along the lakeside, Bar-Asha looked almost anxiously out upon the sparkling water or scanned the highway as if he hoped to come somewhere upon the Rabbi Jeshua teaching, discoursing, or healing. Suddenly, far in advance, his eye caught the gleam of moving spears and then he saw, coming down the highway from Bethsaida, a small detachment of Roman legionaries and, walking within the circle of their spears, a prisoner, guarded and bound.

His own experience in this same sad phase of human ups and downs had created in Bar-Asha a deeper interest in all such unfortunates. Curious as to the person and the crime of this latest captive of Rome, he lingered by the roadside until the group should pass. But when he looked upon the face of the prisoner, he started in terror and surprise. The Roman spearmen led onward as their captive him upon whom so much of Israel's future must depend—Bar-Simon the knifeman, Juda the follower of the Lord!

Instinctively he sprang forward. "Bar-Simon!" he cried.

Like a barrier of steel between the two, down dropped the deadly spears in stern denial. Upon the prisoner's face discontent turned to surprise, surprise to anger, and anger to implied accusation. "Son of Asha; traitor!" said Bar-Simon, almost beneath his breath, yet not so low but that it reached Bar-Asha's tingling ears. "This is your work."

"I pray you," Bar-Asha said to the leader of the guard, whom he recognized as the spearman Horatius, the messenger of Vettius at Chorazin, "let me have speech with your captive. What hath he done amiss?"

"The Jew hath sought to work treason against our lord the Emperor," Horatius replied. "Meddle not with him."

"But your law condemneth no man unheard," Bar-Asha said. "I pray you let me have speech with him. I know your centurion, Vettius of Capernaum. I know your captive too. See; I am but one. I can bring him no rescue, even if I would. And for this courtesy, should it be called in question, will I be answerable to the noble Vettius."

"For a moment, then; be speedy," Horatius assented; and halting his men, he drew them aside into the grateful shadow of the palms while Bar-Asha approached the prisoner.

"How is this my work, son of Simon?" Bar-Asha asked. "Who hath trapped you thus?"

"Vettius, whom you know; the centurion at Capernaum," Bar-Simon replied. "He hath apprehended me as one of the rebel knifemen and a stirrer-up of treason against Rome. Did not you tell him of Messias and of our plans?"

Bar-Asha's eyes dropped quite as much in self-accusation as in confession before Bar-Simon's searching gaze. "Is then the Roman recreant?" he said. "I thought him our friend, Bar-Simon—a recruit for Messias. Alas, I told him all. What now can I do?"

"Much," Bar-Simon replied, in rapid words. "Hearken; for my time is short. None yet knows of this act of treachery save the false centurion. He fears not Messias; rather does he fear me and my brethren as assassins of Rome. His knowledge must go no further. Bar-Asha, he must die!"

"Die?"

"And by your hand. Trust it to none other or our cause is lost. Much—ay, every thing,—depends on haste and secrecy. If I am to die or be cast into prison, farewell to all our hopes. See; the leader comes to break off our interview. If you would lead our cause to triumph, this and this only must be done: Kill Vettius and release me! Act; act with speed or Israel is lost! Do you promise?"

He ceased. Another instant and the spearmen would close around their prisoner. The excitement of the moment was upon them both.

"I promise," Bar-Asha whispered.

The march went forward to Capernaum's gate. Juda the knifeman, was gone, but Bar-Asha, stunned by the mission with which he had been charged, scarce comprehending the vow he had taken, stood alone and silent beneath the Galilean palms. It did not once enter his mind to question the command of Bar-Simon, or to break his plighted word. His duty was clear. By his thoughtless confidences, by his heedless disclosures, the

plot in behalf of Messias was in the possession of Rome. He knew the stern nature of Vettius all too well. He knew, none better, what use the centurion would make of the information he had obtained. Bar-Simon would die. Messias would be deprived of one who, in the hour of action, would be a most important instrument. All the carefully formed plans would fail. Messias himself might, perhaps, be the next victim. Upon him, Cheliel the son of Asha, the salvation of Israel hung. It was the patriot's duty to strike for his country, even though the blow stilled the heart of a friend. Vettius must die.

Where an untenanted hill sloped downward to the lake, Bar-Asha flung himself upon the feathery heather to study out his plan of action. It must be sure and speedy. There must be no hesitation, no delay.

There was no hesitation. When in the west the last gleam of the setting sun turned the brilliancy of daylight into the shades of night, Bar-Asha rose from the ground. Straight into Capernaum he walked, and, at a cutler's booth, provided himself with a dagger, gleaming, strong, and sharp.

Thrusting the weapon within his inner girdle, Cheliel Bar-Asha drew about him the folds of his *simlah*, and, with steps in which timidity and indecision had no part, he proceeded direct to the Roman barracks in that city of Capernaum.

"Stays the Centurion Vettius within?" he asked of the guard at the door.

"He doth," the sentry replied.

"Say then to him, I pray, that one he knoweth well waits an audience on matters of moment to himself and Rome."

The messenger sped within. Another moment and the answer came, "Bid him enter."

Bar-Asha passed the sentries. He crossed the threshold of the curtained doorway. He stood within the presence of the centurion. The test of duty was at hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE CENTURION.

"Ah, my young enthusiast! The Prince that was—the Prince that is to be! What tidings?"

The centurion rose from the couch on which he had flung himself and advanced to greet his visitor. Close at hand sat a secretary with tablet and stylus. Bar-Asha had evidently interrupted a dictation—perhaps, he thought, the very report of Bar-Simon's conspiracy for transmission to the Procurator Pilate. In a corner of the room, as stolid and machine-like as if he had not been but so recently snatched from relentless death, sat the restored Macrinus, at work upon the hollowed neck-guard of the captain's helmet, dented with the hard knocks of long service.

"Could one see you alone, excellent captain?" Bar-Asha asked.

"Ah! more of moment to our cause? Why not? Macrinus, Sejus, go you both without. I would be alone with our friend, the resurrected one. See that we are not disturbed."

Secretary and spearman left the centurion's room. Bar-Asha stood alone with his fate.

"Well, friend, what tidings?" Vettius inquired, laying a hand pleasantly, almost affectionately, upon the young

man's shoulder. "Your face is serious and your look is grave. Is aught amiss with yourself or the good rabbi?"

Bar-Asha hesitated. Was this the tone, this the manner of a foeman? Could treachery to Messias live beneath so friendly an exterior?

"Naught is amiss with me or with Messias," he replied. "But with Bar-Simon all is wrong. He is apprehended, so it is said, by your order and for treason to Rome. Is that true?"

"Where heard you this?" The query came sharp and stern. The friendly touch upon the shoulder was withdrawn.

"Even from Bar-Simon himself," the son of Asha replied. "I have but just seen him, a few short hours back, under guard of your legionaries, brought into Capernaum. Why is this?"

"I am sorry," the centurion replied. "I had hoped to keep from you the knowledge of this move until the rebel had paid the forfeit of his treason. Even now he is despatched, without further waiting here, to the Centurion Marcus Lepidus, at Cæsarea Philippi. Within two days doth the Tetrarch Philip give to the people of his capital a show in his circus, where men must fight the lions. And one of these will surely be Juda Bar-Simon. See; even now I had but finished a writing to the Centurion Lepidus bidding him make an early disposal of my prisoner. Question not my decision. It is best for Rome, best for that good rabbi whose cause we both have at heart, best—most of all—for you, O son of Asha. For know that a man's worst enemy is a false friend."

"How know you Bar-Simon to be a false friend to me?" Cheliel Bar-Asha asked.

"Listen," Vettius made answer. "Here is arisen in your land a glorious rabbi, a mighty teacher, a healer of all the woes of man. His life meaneth wisdom and health for Syria, for the world, if he doth but live to do his heaven-appointed work. Yet here, too, comes a hot-headed robber of the hills—this Juda Bar-Simon of yours. His hand is against every man's, and against Rome in especial. All unmindful of the fate of those who, before this day, have sought to redeem Israel, as they in their perversity and foolhardiness did term their evil ways, he too would raise a bloody rebellion against Rome. Like them, he too would fall in failure, dragging many down. He who fights against the Emperor, fights only to his own death. By removing this chief conspirator—see! I break the useless plot. I spare your land the dark and bloody days of rebellion and of terror. I save that good rabbi—Jeshua, do you call him?—from those who, in their blindness, and all unknown to him, would but use his gracious name and gifts as a cloak for slaughter. I save you, Bar-Asha, whom I have come to love, and whose strong, young life I would save for better things—I save you from disaster, from ignominy, from death. Rome's ways are sharp; Rome's hand is strong; Rome's reckoning is swift. The lions of Philip's circus are your friends. Bar-Simon gone, the land remains at peace. The good rabbi goes forward with his deeds of mercy unstopped by Rome. And for you, Bar-Asha—see! here is service, here is advancement offered you. Come with me. I will make a soldier of you. He who fights for Rome shall be honored by Rome. By the sword you may attain to freedom, citizenship, position, power. My friendship can push you on. Give up your

foolish dreams of a golden city and a Jewish king. No king, though a god himself were crowned in Jerusalem yonder by your own peculiar people, could stand against the all-conquering power of Rome. Let Bar-Simon die. It is best for the good of your land that one life should cease. That life must be Bar-Simon's. Be you, Bar-Asha, my friend, my helper, my son—a strong and faithful soldier of our lord the Emperor. In this alone lies safety. In this alone is glory. Be advised!"

Cheliel Bar-Asha answered nothing. He was deep in thought. Was there not weight and wisdom in what this Roman said? He had gained a powerful friend, one who might help him on to something better than a wandering life given over to plotting against a mighty and strong-seated power. The secret of Gerizim still was his. With the treasure that he was fated to find upon the sacred mount, power would be sure to come to him. Riches themselves were power. Rest was easy; strife was hard.

The wavering nature of the young man—a true son of Issachar in the currents of his shifting nature, in his readiness to accept the gifts of the stranger, to bend the neck to tribute, to let well-enough alone—made him prone to yield. Bar-Simon was a schemer. None knew this better than did he. This uneasy zealot, this knife-man of the hills, had never really shown him any living proof that Messias worked this rising in the land. Did the Master wish it? Was it not perhaps a desire born only of the wishes of Bar-Simon and such as he?

But the promise—the oath! The word of a true Israelite was as a sacred pledge. And what if he did accept the centurion's offer? What would he then

become? The leader, the prince he dreamed? No. Nothing but a slave; a tool of Rome; a part of the great machine that worked only for the crushing out of the yearnings of men; a creature of the tyrant Cæsars whom all his people hated. His dreams of glory and of princely power would all fail and fall. And if, at the last, Messias should indeed awaken the land and, rising to his grand possibilities, become the redeemer of Israel, would not he—Bar-Asha, who had slavishly bowed the neck to Rome—be cut off from all participation in the gifts Messias would bestow on those who had helped him to his kingdom? A renegade was worse than a Gentile, worse than a Samaritan.

His word was sacred; his honor was pledged; his future was at stake. He would cast aside this Roman bribe. He was a true Israelite. He must fulfil his promise.

"Well?" The centurion, who, while not seeming so to do, had covertly watched the ever-changing face, at last broke the silence. "Well, what says my friend? Counsel I not aright?"

"It may be so, good Vettius," Bar-Asha answered slowly. "These words of yours are far too weighty with action for me to lightly answer. Let me, I pray you, say neither yea nor nay until I have well considered."

"Even as you wish," the centurion answered heartily. "Take time for thought, good lad. I would not force to hasty answer one whom I seek to make a friend. It means a life's decision when it once is made."

And Bar-Asha musing said: "For this desire to stand my friend, good Vettius, I thank you. Let me at least, even if I do not become at once your client and follower,

give proof of my estimation of your good intent. See; I myself will act as your messenger to the Centurion Lepidus at Cæsarea, if such despatch be needed."

The centurion looked at the young man closely, but Bar-Asha bore the scrutiny without flinching.

"I do believe I will make test of you, lad," the centurion said at last. "He who is to be a soldier of Rome must show himself ready for any duty, even though it be to bear the death sentence of a friend. Duty knoweth no bounds of love. See; here, on this tablet, is the order that Sejus had but just finished, and needing but for me to affix my seal. It directs Marcus Lepidus, the centurion, to send Juda Bar-Simon to the lions. So; I seal it. Now is it become your comrade's death-warrant. Will you bear it if I trust it to your hand?"

And Bar-Asha said: "Ay, that will I, good friend, if by that act I may make proof of what I stand ready to do if once I enlist beneath the eagles of Rome. And stay—would it not be of value to you—to us—in this matter that I should have a last interview with Bar-Simon? Thus could I gain from him such tidings of his intent as may enable us to know the Master's plans and shield that god-like rabbi, if need be, from any harm or guile. Remember: Bar-Simon hath been taken unawares. Perchance he may have matters in his keeping that should not die with him; matters that touch the Master closely. Give me entrance to him and trust me to gain the facts and use them for Messias' good."

Again the centurion looked closely at his visitor; again Bar-Asha bore the scrutiny.

"It is counselled well, O son of Asha," Vettius said at last. "Already I do see in you the making of a counsel-

lor and a man. Yes, I will give you the permit that shall pass you to Bar-Simon's cell."

And, dropping into the seat of his secretary, upon another tablet he wrote :

"*Caius Vettius, centurion at Capernaum, to Titus Cæso, keeper of the dungeons at Cæsarea Philippi,—Greeting :*

"Let the bearer, who is my messenger, have instant and undisturbed speech with the Jewish captive, who is called Juda Bar-Simon."

The captain's head, well sprinkled with gray, bends over the tablet, as he affixes to the order the official seal. His undefended neck lies all exposed. What is it that suddenly gleams above it? Ho, Vettius, stout veteran of the wars, good soldier of Rome—beware ; beware !

Too late. With arm nerved for the blow by the remembrance of his promise, and by the hope of Israel's deliverance, Bar-Asha strikes with deadly force and aim. Straight through the bended neck cuts that cruel steel. Once, twice, thrice, the avenging knife descends, and, without a cry, without a word, with but one startled look of mingled horror and surprise, the victim of those vicious thrusts falls prone upon the floor.

Now ; the tablets—quick ! Speed, speed, son of Asha ! Fly, ere your work is found ! Small mercy to you, if here, by the prostrate body of your would-be friend, you now shall be discovered. With feverish haste he seizes the order and the pass and thrusts them within his girdle beside the bloody knife. He tears from its socket and dashes to the floor the flickering torch, half hopeful that it may burn down the Roman barracks and conceal his crime. Then, without a look at his completed work, without an instant's delay, he hastens from the room.

His wrongs upon the Galilean highway, the spurning of his mother at the gate of Nain, his sufferings at Tiberias, are all avenged. The heel of Rome has been bruised indeed. The cause of Israel's redemption is saved from overthrow. Caius Vettius, the centurion at Capernaum, lies dead within his house. The son of Asha has kept his pledge.

CHAPTER XX.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

Spread over the hill-slopes under the very shadow of Hermon's snowy dome, stately in marble and gorgeous in decoration, its villas and palaces, its baths, its circus, and its temples bespeaking it the home of luxury and of wealth, stretched the city of Cæsarea Philippi—capital and stronghold of the tetrarchy of Philip, son of him whom men had called Herod the Great.

From the mighty castle on the height that overlooked and overawed the country round to the white temple whose gleaming marbles rose in honor of the mighty Cæsar and the heathen Pan, the city shone like a precious gem laid in priceless setting. All about it stretched that beautiful and impressive landscape of hill and vale and towering limestone cliff that holds within its keeping the sources of the storied Jordan. Far above it the head of Hermon, crowned with perpetual snow, rose eight thousand feet in air, while art and nature alike combined to make this Sybaritic city of Northern Palestine attractive, alluring, and imposing—to make it, as Stanley aptly terms it, "a Syrian Tivoli."

Out from the shades of the oaks and terebinths, while yet the sun stood high in the western heavens, a traveller rode across the carpet of turf and through the park-like

verdure to where, amid its olive groves, the heathen city of the northern Herods sat in regal state. Over the narrow bridge that still, in ruinous decay, spans the limestone gorge, and up the steep incline he rode. Halting only at the entrance gate of the great castle, he summoned the warder with a loud halloo, and then displayed the writing to the commandant, the Centurion Lepidus, that should gain him admittance.

Entrance is speedily granted. The centurion's order is delivered, the pass displayed, and at once, without pause for refreshment or for rest, down the dark stairway at the castle's western end, Cheliel Bar-Asha descends to his interview with the captive knifeman.

The heavy dungeon door swings slowly open. The friends are met. The turnkey withdraws; they are alone at last.

"Speak, son of Asha! Is it done?"

"Vettius lives no more," Bar-Asha replied.

"Now praises to the Lord of Hosts for our deliverance! Hearken to me, worthy friend. To-morrow I must die. I am no match for the lions of the tetrarch's circus. My race is run. But ere I die——"

"Son of Simon, you shall not die," Bar-Asha broke in upon his words. "I bring you freedom."

"How?"

"Mine was the error; be mine the expiation. Go you out in my stead. Let me remain here in yours. It shall be a life for a life."

Bar-Simon grasped the young man's hands in his. "No, no, that must not be," he cried. "You have redeemed the cause. Go now to take up my work and carry it on to triumph."

"Not so," Bar-Asha said. "You are Messias' friend, his helper and his follower. Your life is needful for his welfare and success. Mine is of little worth to him. What have I done yet to prove my faith? Let me prove it now. For him will I take your place; for him will I face the lions; for him, if need be, will I die the death. Thus shall I, at least, make one sacrifice for the Lord. I can do no more. Hasten you, Bar-Simon, while yet the time remains. Even now the avengers of Vettius' murder may be on my track. Doubt not that I must die for that which I have done; doubt not, too, that I will bravely fall. Do you, good friend, take up the Master's work. And, when Messias indeed is king, when in the palaces at Jerusalem the princes of Israel shall come into their own again, then remember the poor son of Issachar who would gladly have shared the triumph of our Lord, but who at least could die that it might thus gloriously be brought in. And then, I pray you, let the King Messias know how one who was faithful to him died that he might win his crown."

"Son of Asha," cried Bar-Simon, strangely moved by the young man's voluntary sacrifice, "there spoke the hero; there a valiant prince in Israel. But that I did believe that so noble a sacrifice would not be permitted to be made, I would say no, no, and ever no to your plan. But can I think that one whom our Lord Messias has already raised from death will be allowed to die when now his life is of so great need to our cause? No; your life shall not be lost. Once again will the Master interfere to deliver you. I will speed to him. I will bid him by his words of power defend you from the lion's cruel fangs, deliver you even from the jaws of death

itself. You say aright. The Master hath need of me. I have much to do. I accept your noble offer—your life for mine! And yet you shall not die. Be strengthened by the thought. Be valiant, brave, and strong, and deliverance shall surely come. And if not—if once again the death-angel shall lay his icy hand upon you, yet once again shall Messias' gracious touch, Messias' godlike word bring you back to life and duty. Be steadfast and fear not. Your friendship, your sacrifice shall not go unrewarded. The Lord of Hosts be with you. The God of Jacob be your staff and stay. Fare you well!"

Even while he had been pouring out his thanks had the transfer of garments been made, and now Bar-Simon stood in Bar-Asha's clothes, the young man of Nain in those of the knifeman of Kerioth. For all his bold and warlike talk, with all his shrewdness and his schemes of rebellion, there was little of the martyr's stuff in Juda Bar-Simon. He could plan treason cunningly, he could plot other men into peril, but he himself had no desire for the risks of punishment or the crown of martyrdom. In every phase of the world's shifting story of strife and scheming, of effort and of risk, of plans for enfranchisement and dreams of liberty, there have been those who, arch-conspirators and chiefs of rebels though they were, still kept ever a cautious outlook for the welfare of number one, and, even at the sacrifice of their friends and followers, sought safety wherever safety presented itself.

The hasty farewell was said; the grateful Juda flung his arms about the neck of his deliverer and kissed him fervently on cheek and brow. Then, summoning the turnkey by ringing blows of his staff upon those ada-

mantine walls, the liberated knifeman quickly left the dungeons, from which he had thought to go only to his death. Bar-Asha was alone.

When once the excitement of a deed of daring or of enterprise is passed reaction quickly comes. Left thus to himself Cheliel Bar-Asha fell headlong from the heights of supremest sacrifice to the depths of utter helplessness and woe.

His was an ever-changing nature. Scarcely had the footsteps of the man whose life he had saved died away, when Bar-Asha would have given all the wealth he hoped to possess to recall him. But those merciless dungeon walls gave back only the echoes of his cry. There came neither deliverer nor relief. He must die.

Had he been wise, had he been aught but imbecile to thus fling away his life? Who was Juda Bar-Simon—who Messias, indeed, that he should die for them? All the horrors of that other night came thronging back—that night of terror when, in the dungeons at Tiberias, he had waited for morning and death. Fool, double fool, he cried, thus to fling away all his chances, all his future, all his fortune for a sentiment. Of what use now to him were all the treasures of Gerizim? Of what value to him, even if the triumph of Messias did come grandly in, would victory or glory be? Better for him if he had saved himself from the bitter crime of Vettius' cruel murder; better if he had accepted the Roman's offer, and lived even as the tool and creature of the Cæsar. The good centurion had been his friend. Why should he have thus falsely struck to death so good, so noble a well-wisher?

Even his former experience gave him little promise of

deliverance now. Messias was miles away. How could the Master save him ; how even bring him back from death ?

In fancy already he saw the crowded amphitheatre, the slowly opening doors of those awful cages, the crawling, crouching lions—death ! The solitude of his cell, the crowding fancies brought about through such a black solitude, emphasized all the horrors that he knew were in store for him. He gave himself up to despair, to self-censure, to doubt and disbelief.

O for one more chance for liberty ! O for the gift of a vanished yesterday. For such what would he not barter—faith, purpose, honor, country, friends, Messias even ! For what were all these compared to life ?

So, full of terror and harassed by weakness of will and loss of heart, Bar-Asha spent the slowly dragging hours of that awful night.

And when the glimmer that only hinted at the bright day that had dawned without told him that his time had nearly come, still was he weak of spirit.

Even to the most craven, when once he faces the crucial hour, there sometimes comes an unexpected and new-born courage. Bar-Asha was no craven. His was but the nature of one who is weak of will. Courage he never lacked. So, as the morning grew apace, new spirit came ; as the hours left to him fell away, the valor of desperation took their place. Determined to sell his life dearly, if so it must go out, he braced himself for the last. If he must face the beasts, at least he would face them boldly, and, like a valiant soldier, fight gallantly for his life.

CHAPTER XXI.

TO THE LIONS.

"One Juda Bar-Simon, a Gaulonite. For plotting treason against our lord the Emperor: to the lions! If he shall conquer—to the galleys for life!"

It was the voice of the *editor*, or manager of the games that day in the circus of Cæsarea Philippi. The great amphitheatre was thronged with spectators. The gay-colored *velaria* flapped lazily in the gentle breezes that were borne downward from the heights of Hermon.

Royalty in the person of Philip the tetrarch; power in the presence of Roman officials and Greek tide-waiters; enthusiasm in the straining eyes and throats hoarse from shouting, of the heterogeneous mass that thronged the "Gentile" cities of Palestine, looked down upon the arena from decorated boxes and uncomfortable tiers of polished stone.

Already the games had been in progress. There had been wrestling and tumbling; there had been foot-races and chariot-races; there had been exhibitions of trained beasts. Cheers for the victors and favorites, jeers for the defeated and the overthrown, had punctuated the lengthy programme. And now must come that tinge of blood without which, already through the provinces of Rome as in the great capital in the west whose follies and whose

vices they copied, no exhibition in circus or amphitheatre was deemed complete.

Detested as a pagan amusement by the patriot Jews to whom the circus was an abomination and a place of pollution, these shows were to the Gentile people who crowded the alien cities of the alien Herods a welcome source of amusement, replete with all the exciting sensations that occupied so large a space in the life of the Roman people.

To the waiting throng that filled the stone benches of the open semicircle at the foot of the castle-hill in Cæsarea Philippi the announcement of the *editor* was most welcome. They hoped this criminal, Bar-Simon, would prove alert and strong, otherwise his tussle with the lions would be but stupid sport. A crouch, a spring, a crunching of human bones, and all would be over. They wished, rather, for a show of skill, a chance to watch, to criticise, to applaud. Whether in the end man or lion should receive the applause, was to them a matter of small concern.

The narrow door of one of the vaulted cells beneath the overhanging tiers swung open. The man was first to be displayed.

A murmur of applause passed through the curious throng. "By Bacchus!" said one to his neighbor; "a promising-looking young fellow this Bar-Simon. Here may yet be sport."

Naked, save for the closely fitting cloth that covered his loins, with a netting of light but strong stuff thrown across his left arm, and with a sharpened *spatha* in his right hand, the false Bar-Simon, the real son of Asha, stepped into the amphitheatre. His eyes made the round

of the crowded circus. Not a friend in all that throng. Only a mass of curious faces, waiting to see him die. Well, if his hour indeed had come they should see that he who once had tasted death did not fear it. He who had shown his valor at Gamala would die game. With folded arms and with a look of defiance and determination on his handsome face, he walked swiftly to the centre of the sand-strewn arena, and awaited his foes.

With a rattling, grating sound the iron bars that screened the front of another of those underground cells were lifted from above. A moment's delay and then a tawny muzzle, topped with a thick, black mane, was thrust through the opening. Another moment and a great lion, his shaggy yellow hide plentifully shaded with black, sprung, with a roar of relief at this sudden freedom, out toward the centre of the ring. The rattling rise of another and yet another cage-door succeeded, and from their respective dens another and yet another lion followed the leader. Bar-Asha was to have no lack of work.

The great cats lay, for a while, crouched listlessly upon the sand. Their eyes roamed about the circus, curious, wondering. To them this strange environment of open space and an encircling throng of human beings was matter for study. They seemed in no haste to do more than crouch and investigate their surroundings.

The watchers grew impatient. "Ho! in the ring there; stir them up!" came the cry from the benches. But Bar-Asha, his eyes on the lions, still stood with folded arms, immovable as a statue.

The shout roused the tawny brutes. Two of them rose, and stealthily made the circuit of the amphitheatre,

with lowered heads, smelling here and there as if to become still better acquainted with their strange surroundings. Then one, wheeling quickly about, as if to reverse the circuit, came sharply against his fellow. There was an angry snarl, a deep growl, a double roar, and in an instant the two great beasts, rivals perhaps in days of freedom on African sands either for the supremacy of strength or the affection of some fickle lady of their savage race, grappled in deadly struggle.

Awakened by this familar sound of battle, the third lion—he who had first sprung from the cages—looked about for an antagonist. He spied Bar-Asha still standing upright and immovable. Is it man or statue? the lion wondered. At least he would risk investigation and discover whether there was life or not in this solitary form. With a dull, purring growl he crawled toward that upright figure, and crouched for the death-dealing spring. There is a movement in the statue. The folded arms draw quickly apart. The shawl, stripped from the arm, is held loosely in the hand.

So, so, argued the lion; here is no statue. Here is really a life—a foeman or a meal.

The tawny head draws slowly back. The tension of the legs is increased. Then—there is a flash of yellow in the air and the great brute launches itself straight at Bar-Asha's head. The combatants beyond still growl and tug and tumble, lost to all else but their own long-standing quarrel.

The man's lithe, graceful figure springs aside as the lion cleaves the air. It springs aside, but hardly out of range. One blackly shaded paw strikes as the watcher jumps, and down upon the sand sprawls the young Jew.

So; the lion turns about. "Quick, Jew, or he is on you! Ha, a nimble fellow; see, he is up, he is off"; and with bleeding shoulder, but calm and defiant still, he awaits the second attack.

Again the lion crouches; again it launches itself in air; again the quick young athlete springs aside. Here is no second fall. The wary eye watches every motion, the strong but supple hands grasp the scarf-like net and hold it far to the right; then, as the lion touches the ground, the scarf with a dexterous fling is thrown about the great head and in an instant the whole forepart of the beast is all enveloped in the encircling net.

Struggling, tearing, raging to free himself from this unexpected encumbrance, the lion for an instant seems to forget its human foe and endeavors only to relieve itself of the all-entangling net. It is Bar-Asha's opportunity. With a spring he is at the side of this tossing, tumbling brute. Quick of stroke and sure of aim he buries the sharp-bladed *spatha* deep in the lion's body. Again the thrust is sped. With a roar of mingled rage and pain the lion frees its head from the distracting net and snaps savagely at its foe, but with its legs still entangled it is unable to crouch and spring. And now—"Ye gods! but he is a cool fellow!"—almost bestriding the hindquarters of the brute, Bar-Asha drives his short sword twice again into the very vitals of the beast. There is one broken roar, a last convulsive twitch, a final attempt to spring, and then, pierced with four fatal wounds, the lion rolls over and, at the very feet of the young Jew, lies dead.

Meanwhile the other fight has sped with equal advantage. Neither rival is the victor. Both are spent and

torn. And even as they roll apart, seeking respite for a second duel to the death, Bar-Asha, unmindful of the tumult that fills the crowded tiers, where men and women shout in excitement over this double fight, crosses swiftly to the battle-spent lions who are not even aware of his presence, so intent are they upon their own great quarrel. Intrepid, wary, quick, and all alert, Bar-Asha falls first upon one of the duellists and then upon the other. Too nearly spent with their own fury and their gaping wounds to offer sufficient resistance, each shaggy neck feels the death-thrust of that merciless steel, and almost before the excited watchers appreciate his act Bar-Asha stands triumphant—victor over three African lions!

Shout upon shout rang through the crowded circus, and soon, above the cheers, could be distinguished the cry: "Pardon, pardon for the Jew! Life for the victor! No galleys, no galleys! Pardon for the son of Simon!"

The *editor* of the games sprang into the ring. No need to fear the lions now. Only their victor lives. The *editor* threw a laurel wreath upon Bar-Asha's curling hair. "Brave fellow!" he cried, even his circus-sated nature roused to enthusiasm. "The like I never saw. Yonder is the noble tetrarch. Down on your knees and sue for pardon and for mercy."

With outstretched hands Bar-Asha turned toward the royal box. And Philip, the tetrarch, gentler and more merciful than his brothers of the Herod blood, himself full of delight over this triple triumph, cried: "Well and bravely fought, O Jew! Go free. I take it on myself to set you right with Rome."

But, even as the victor in the contest turned to leave the scene of his marvellous success—a free man once more—the sound of clattering hoofs was heard without, and through the entrance-way, straight into the arena, galloped a Roman spearman.

"Hold!" he cried. "No freedom for an assassin! Tetrarch, I claim a prisoner. Here is a trick. Here is not the Bar-Simon you did condemn to death. This is Bar-Asha of Nain. He has foully murdered, in his own house at Capernaum, the Centurion Vettius!" And looking up at the horseman, Bar-Asha recognized in this latest arrival Macrinus the Roman spearman.

Into every man's life come moments of crisis when, for good or ill, fate must be boldly faced and the future hazarded upon a single act. Such a moment had come to Cheliel Bar-Asha. Victor in a crowded and applauding circus, he must now play the craven or strike for liberty.

"Back, Roman!" he cried. "The tetrarch has given me my life. I hold him to his pledge."

"Fool!" Macrinus answered, hot with rage, "Rome's vengeance doth outweigh a tetrarch's pledges. You struck most foully to his death him who was your friend. But, more than that, you killed a soldier of the Emperor. Your life is forfeit. Yield yourself prisoner, or die even where you stand."

Bar-Asha brandished aloft his victorious sword, still red with the blood of the slaughtered lions.

"Who touches hand to me," he cried, "dies like these beasts that I have slain. Beware, Macrinus! Stand off, or follow your captain down to hell!"

"Ho, base Jew; work you in such guise! Hollo, my

soldiers!" the spearman called to those who followed him. "Close in; charge home! Strike down this dog of an assassin!"

"Rescue!" Bar-Asha cried, raising his hands in appeal to the crowded tiers where still the people sat, full of excitement and with growing interest in this unexpected addition to the day's programme of sport. "Rescue for him whom the tetrarch has pardoned!"

Macrinus sprang from his horse. The little detail of spearmen who accompanied him charged through the entrance-way. The people sprang to their feet in a tumult of protest and of cheers. But even as Bar-Asha, bracing himself for the assault, defiantly stood at bay, over the low parapet that capped the inner ring, there leaped, here and there, in various parts of the amphitheatre, certain swarthy men of the hills—a good score at least,—and as they sprang into the arena they drew from beneath their cloaks the gleaming daggers of the knifemen.

They surrounded the victor of the day. "Rescue for Bar-Asha!" they shouted. "Rescue for the hero of Gamala! Death to Rome!"

"Treason! treason! rally for Rome!" Macrinus shouted. But all too late. The deadly weapons of the rescuers flashed in air. Down fell Macrinus the spearman, dead, beneath those fatal knives. Down, too, fell many soldiers of the Roman band, surprised and overpowered by that unlooked-for attack. The whole circus was in an uproar.

"Live, Prince of Issachar!" the knifemen cried; "Juda Bar-Simon sends you life for life!" And raising Bar-Asha in their arms, they dashed with him

through the entrance-way and out into the city streets even before the scattered guard of the Tetrarch Philip had time to rally to the aid of Rome.

There was a short, sharp fight at the city gates. The soldiers of the tetrarch were overpowered and driven back. The knifemen were victors in the strife. But, even as through the gate of Cæsarea and over the bridge to the valley road the rescuers of Bar-Asha dashed, their leader, pierced by a spear, fell to the earth and was surrounded by the tetrarch's guard. "Back, friends, and save the captain; the son of Abbas is down!" his fleeing comrades cried. But, ere they could turn to the rescue, out from the midst of those who held him captive came the voice of the wounded man. "Leave me, leave me, brothers; save yourselves. To the hills with Bar-Asha. Lo; our vow is kept."

To delay longer was useless. Heavy reinforcements from the tetrarch's men came swarming through the gate. Obeying their captain's command the knifemen, bearing Bar-Asha along with them, dashed in full flight toward the hills beyond the Jordan, leaving in the hands of his captors the wounded Jeshua Bar-Abbas, their leader.

"Now Bar-Abbas was a robber."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN HIDING.

THROUGH all the years that Syria bent to the hated sway of Rome, there were many among her people who chafed and raged beneath the yoke. This was especially true of those within the borders of Palestine—the freedom-loving Jews. From the days of Pompey, the first of the Roman conquerors, to those of Hadrian and Heraclius, there were ever among the Israelites those who rebelled against the power of Rome and, defeated in losing tumults and in bloody insurrections, became outlaws and fugitives in the stern and sterile fastnesses of the hills that compass the land about. To these restless patriots the Romans gave the convenient but unjust name of robbers. And as "robbers" all fugitives from Roman justice or Roman tyranny were forever known.

In that strangely picturesque and beautiful country east of the Jordan which, even from the days of Jacob the patriarch, has been known as the Land of Gilead, there runs from north to south a sloping mountain range. It is thickly fringed with oak and walnut trees, and is known as the *Jebel* or mountains of Ajlun. At the foot of these evergreen slopes stretches the valley of the Jordan—the winding course of that storied river distinctly traced out by a line of luxuriant verdure. From

the abrupt western slope may be seen one of the most remarkable of historic landscapes—a region filled with more of interest to the human race than any corresponding stretch of country in all the wide world.

Galilee and the Dead Sea, Hermon with the snowy crest, Tabor and the hill country about Nazareth, Esdraelon's fertile plains, with Mount Carmel beyond, overlooking the great Western Sea, the billowy ranges of the Mid-Palestine hills—Gilboa and Samaria, Ebal and Gerizim,—the rocky heights of Ephraim and of Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives just hiding from view the gleaming marbles of Jerusalem, the stern, bare mountains of the Sinai barrier, the vast red plain that fringes the wilderness of the Hauran and loses itself in the Assyrian desert—these all may be descried by him whose eye overlooks this fair and notable prospect. From these rocky heights, in the far-off days, did Abraham and Jacob survey the land their descendants were to make historic. Somewhere, upon this very slope, had the Master himself, in the days of his strong temptation, looked out, with the full knowledge of what, if but he would, that outlook might be to him, upon all the kingdoms of the world and the glories of them, and made the one great choice that meant the greater seeming sacrifice of his power and his life.

Below, in the section drained by the Jordan watershed, lay, at the time of our story, the ten Gentile cities of the Decapolis, rich, teeming, and powerful. Here, too, ran the highway from Philadelphia to Damascus, and from the even more distant points of Petra the Red, in the south, to Palmyra, City of Palms, in the farther north. And here, in the rocky fastnesses that overhung all this

verdure, beauty, and life, were the retreats of the "robbers"—the outlaws and the knifemen—those desperate refugees from among the restless elements of Israel's restless days.

It was in certain of these caves of refuge among the hills of Gilead that the band of Bar-Abbas, the "robber," had their safe retreat. And here Bar-Asha lay in hiding. His was a crime that no injustice could excuse, no valor could condone. He had killed a centurion of Rome; he had murderously withstood the power of Rome; more than all, he had overthrown and escaped from the soldiers of Rome. Resistance could no further go. The great empire never forgave success. Bar-Asha was outlawed. Once again his life was forfeit to the Emperor.

Safely housed in his rocky covert among the greens of Gilead, Bar-Asha looked down upon the highway that skirted the valley far below, and out over the panorama of Palestine stretched before him. There on Gerizim lay the treasure he seemed destined never to secure, now farther than ever from his grasp, an outlawed and hunted criminal. There, too, from Jerusalem to the Galilean hills, lay the land in which he had hoped to find power and station, now more than ever beyond his attaining. And these men who had rescued him, how long would they prove his friends? Through him they had lost their leader, through him they were in great and pressing danger. Was he never to find rest, never to do the right thing, never to be other than a blunderer and a failure? Would that he had never risked his fortunes on the unattainable. Would that he had gone on, unambitious and unmolested, among his

plodding kinsfolk of Nain and of the Esdraelon plain—a simple driver of camels, a humble seller of leeks and cucumbers.

So passed the hours through one, two, and three days of regrets, of dissatisfaction, and of gloomy forebodings. His robber hosts, though they did not disturb him, seemed to him restless and uneasy, full of solicitude over the fate of their captain and meditating plans for his deliverance from the hands of Rome. Even now, as he, for whose rescue they had risked their lives and lost their leader, holding himself alone and apart, scorned their comradeship and meditated a plan of desertion, he caught the strains of one of their savage songs as it echoed from crag to crag:

"Safe-housed in our hills as the eagles of Edom,
As swift in surprise as the lions of Dan,
Sure-handed, firm-banded, in raid and in foray,
We are Israel's true-men, through blood and through ban.
We wait in our rock-lair the rally for freedom—
For the spoiling of Herod, the bruising of Rome;
With knife-flash and life-dash, for death or for glory—
Out, steel, for our vengeance! Strike swift and strike home!
Then trembles the foeman,
Be he Herod or Roman,
Who lists to our cry as his courage it chills:
'God only is Lord!
For freedom; for freedom!'
Up! strike with Bar-Abbas, the Hope of the Hills!"

Should he second them? Bar-Asha asked himself. Should he, once again, rush blindly into danger? No, he had risked too much already. He would quietly bide his time until he could, with safety, seek once more his mother's home in Nain, and there, giving over forever

all the plans he once had held, he would relapse into the dull life of his stolid kinsfolk—those listless sons of Issachar who were content to till their fertile fields and, unquestioning, bow their necks to tribute.

Thus he lay and thus he reasoned. With little heed and with even less of interest he heard below him, coming up from the rocks and evergreens, the singular call that indicated the approach of one initiated in all the ways and warnings of Bar-Abbas' band. What to him was cry of scout or return of spy? He had nothing in common with these outlaws, who had hoped to make him the leader in their captain's place. The enthusiasm of the conflict at Gamala, the pluck and valor of the circus at Cæsarea had all departed from him. He had neither desire for conflict nor promptings to valor.

"Son of Asha, is it well with you?"

He looked carelessly up into the face of his questioner. Here once again was the man who had so often come into his life to make or to mar—Juda Bar-Simon, the knifeman.

"It is not well with me, O son of Simon," Bar-Asha answered a trifle testily. "I am full of trouble, full of doubt and sadness. Would that I were again a camel-driver on the hills by Nain, even as you did find me in the days long past."

Bar-Simon caught him by both shoulders and looked steadfastly into his eyes.

"Why, man, what weakness is this?" he cried. "Is this the hero who fought at Gamala? Is this the enthusiast who pledged himself so gloriously amid the rocks of Engedi? Is this the noble friend who stood in my stead at Cæsarea in the circus of the tetrarch

and slew the lions to whom I had been doomed? Up, up, son of Asha; take heart of strength. Fame and fortune, power, wealth, and honors were never nearer to your hand than they do lie this day. See; here below, among the cities of Decapolis, Messias walks. Come with me. See him, hear him, speak with him if you will. Then shall you see how close at hand the future lies; how much of promise and of worth it holds."

"The Master!" Bar-Asha's wandering interest came surging back. "Ay, let me see him; let me hear him—but is it safe? I am an outlaw here, in hiding from Rome. How may I hope to escape the punishment that walks below, searching for the murderer of Vettius the centurion, for the assassin of Macrinus the spearman? It may not be, Bar-Simon. I dare not."

"Dare not!" the knifeman exclaimed. "And why? Have I ever yet failed you in promise or in fulfilment? Trust yourself to me, and all Rome shall vainly look into your face for the outlaw whose life they seek. He who has been in hiding knows how to hide even in the densest crowds."

Any thing was preferable to this moping in the hills. Bar-Asha yielded speedily, and soon, under the experienced manipulation of Bar-Simon, he stood disguised—an Arab of the Arabs, stained to their complexion, clothed in their robes, a veritable child of the desert and the sun.

Then, down into the world of men they passed; and by the shores of Galilee they found the Master. All Bar-Asha's wandering love came back. There was his Master, there his glorious king,—walking, busy, helpful, transfigured—in the centre of worshipping throngs. With

words of comfort to some, of wisdom and counsel to others, of healing, helping, enlightening, a source of hope to the hopeless, of joy to the joyless, of rest to the way-worn—surely never man spake as this man.

And when at the close of the day the multitudes would not leave him, but clung to him for help and inspiration, lo ! there on the verdant hill-slopes the Master, with but the slender provender of one sagacious lad—the five barley loaves and two small fishes of a hungry boy—fed that great throng of "five thousand men besides women and children"—fed them to their satisfaction, and then, while all men marvelled, his disciples gathered up from that great camp-meeting ground twelve heaping baskets, filled with the fragments of the feast.

More than the healing, more than the helping, more even than the words of counsel, of wisdom and enlightenment, did this marvel of a feast touch the hearts of all. The surest way to popularity is through the appetites of men ; the stomach yields even when the heart resists. Of all the wondrous miracles of the Christ only this paltry one roused the people to action. He who could command at will the power to feed and satisfy the hungry might do, could do, all things. He who could feed could find. Luxury, ease, power, freedom, dominion, wealth—could he not command all these for Israel ? Again and yet again the cry arose, "*Malka Meshichah !* It is the King Messias ! "

Bar-Asha's heart beat high. Had the moment come at last ? The people were stirred as never before. What, now, would the knifeman advise ? Bar-Asha sought him out where, near to the Master, the son of Simon stood, trembling with excitement.

"What think you, son of Asha?" said this follower of the Lord. "Shall we declare our plan? On every hand, as I gathered up the fragments, did I hear the words: 'Messias has come! Here is our king at last!' See, how they talk and argue in all the earnestness of growing faith. It is our time, Bar-Asha. Shout; raise you the voice of guidance—it is not for me to do. Cry you aloud to them all: 'Shall not he be our king?'"

The frenzy of the moment was upon them both. "To doubt would be disloyalty." Full of hope, forgetful of his elaborate disguise, burning with the enthusiasm that springs from wonder over unfathomable marvels, raised once again to the very pinnacle of expectation and desire, Bar-Asha sprang upon a piece of rising ground and pointed toward the spot where, quiet and all unmoved by the excitement of the hour, stood the Messenger of God.

"Brethren all! Men of Israel!" Bar-Asha shouted, "Hear me; hear me and give heed. Can we longer doubt? Is not this our king? Down Herod; down Rome! Up with the King Messias! Shout: Hail and Alleluia to our heaven-sent Lord!"

Then tossing arms and surging forms pressed all about the Master. From thousands of clamorous throats rang out the vociferous cry: "*Malka Meshichah!* the King, the King Messias! Welcome to the son of David! Hail and Alleluia to our Lord! He shall be our ruler, our leader, and our king!"

Into the surging, swaying mass of men Bar-Asha dashed. Elbowing his way so vigorously that none dared stop his course, he pushed to the very centre of that shouting throng.

"Kneel, kneel to the King!" he commanded. And, dropping to the ground, with uplifted arms and quivering voice he cried aloud to this calm and motionless one who looked down so pityingly upon him: "Messias, Master, Redeemer of Israel! we are yours. Rule, king over Israel!"

But, even as he spoke, even as, with outstretched hands, the kneeling people echoed the cry of this fervid son of Asha—behold, they were alone! The Master had disappeared.

A great silence, followed by the rising murmurs of surprise, fell upon that wondering host. And, in the midst of his grief, overborne as he was by the sense of loss and the downfall of his most glowing expectations, Bar-Asha felt a light touch upon his arm. He started in a surprise that quickly changed to joy, as glancing around he looked into the tender and compassionate eyes of Adah, the daughter of Jair, the merchant of Chorazin.

"Son of Asha," whispered the girl; "not skilful coloring, nor Arabian robes, nor all the disguising that the ready brain may devise can hide the ring of the voice that is familiar. My father—and I—have sought you everywhere. Why have you left us thus; and why, O why, Bar-Asha—Cheliel, my friend—are you here, lifting your voice for a hope that may not be? The Master will surely reign, but never as you desire."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE POWER OF LOVE.

STRONG emotion is the surest of telltales. Lost to every thing save the presence and the opportunity of Messias, fired with the excitement of the moment, Cheliel Bar-Asha had forgotten his own great danger, his elaborate disguise, every thing but the time and the hour that were to have made his wishes realities—and did not!

Love is a keen detective. Had Adah the daughter of Jair, sought to play into Roman hands she could, even before she spoke, have delivered the murderer of the Centurion Vettius to a swift and certain doom. For not the swart face, nor the Arabian garb of Bar-Asha, could conceal from her woman's penetration the features or the identity of the man she loved.

It was even then, as she had fathomed the mystery of his disguise, that she had betrayed to herself her own unconscious secret. She loved Bar-Asha.

The contact and the conferences of those happy hours at her father's house in Chorazin, the similarity of their experiences, even the dissimilarity of their conclusions and their faiths—all these had worked within her a will stronger than any she could oppose to it, had she cared to ward it off. But care she did not. This handsome

young Jew of Nain, this enthusiast and yet this waverer, who, swayed by moods and circumstances, was to-day a partisan, to-morrow a doubter, had won her heart—her heart so strong and steadfast, so loyal and so pure.

A maiden's love is the alembic in which all aspirations, all desires are tried and tested. To its formulæ of faith and trust all doubts must be resolved. It is quick to read danger to the loved one, ready to shield, strong to defend.

Adah knew the duty to which this hitherto unrecognized and unsuspecting love impelled her. Bar-Asha was in disguise ; he was in danger. For some infringement of the law his life now stood in jeopardy. But love outweighs the law. It was for her to aid, to comfort, to strengthen him.

Her look, her touch, her smile, quite as much as her words of recognition and of inquiry, drew him away from that surging, wondering, leaderless mass of men. He, too, was as unsettled as were these, his fellow-countrymen. Their spontaneous sedition had been made inoperative by the disappearance of the one whom they would have hailed as king ; their shouts died away into query ; their joyful and excited clamor changed to a puzzled and helpless surprise.

"Son of Asha," the girl inquired as they passed from the encircling throng, "what hath happened ? You are yourself, and yet you are even as some one else. Tell me, I pray, are you in distress or danger ? "

Bar-Asha laid a warning finger upon his lips.

"Sweet daughter of your father," he said. "Adah, my friend, I owe you my life. But for your timely words I should have cast caution to the winds and have been apprehended of mine enemies. I am in hiding from

Rome. Adah, touch me not. There is blood upon my hand. There is a ban upon my life. But," and he looked proudly into her anxious face, "it is blood shed for Israel. It is crime done for my country."

"Blood and ban?" Adah whispered, shrinking, yet nearer drawn; "crime, say you? Is it then so bad as that? And why?"

Briefly Bar-Asha told his story. "But it was done for Israel," he ended in explanation and extenuation.

"For Israel," Adah repeated. "Oh, God of our fathers, what crimes are done in the name of patriotism! Oh, Lord of Hosts! must there ever be strife in our land? Oh, friend of mine, was it needed, even in Israel's cause, to strike down one who would have stood your favorer, one whom Messias himself had blessed?"

"The cause of country outweighs all other needs," Bar-Asha replied. "But that I did love Israel's glory more than I did prize even the friendship of this Roman, who might have worked me good, think you I would thus have struck him down? Only thus could I save the kingdom for Messias—the kingdom which, this very day, he hath refused to take? Why, O why, did he say the people nay? So near a king, and yet to flee from his mighty opportunity!"

But Adah shook her head in protest. "His kingdom is not of this world," she made answer. "Said I not so on our house-top in Chorazin? And did not his very act, this day, prove my word and his? Oh, friend and brother, when will your eyes be opened to the truth? When will you see the mightier glory of him who is greater than kingdom, greater than country—the Saviour of the world?"

"Ay, saviour through empire," Bar-Asha replied. "I

have faith in him, dear Adah, though it is not of the sort that you would bid me have, though it be rudely pushed by this day's action. But Messias is all-wise as he is all-powerful. For some good purpose, to some good end he must thus have cast aside the wishes of the people. I will yet have faith and bide his bidding."

"But faith, son of Asha," the girl returned, "must be something more than the faith that hopes only and cannot believe when hope is dead. Messias is my Lord. Not a prince, a soldier, or a king, but Lord of my life, my heart, my strength. I have faith in you, my friend, as one who is noble, true, and good, but the Master is of higher mould than are we weak ones of earth. My faith in him is even of that strength that he demands, a faith that shall doubt not but that shall be strong enough to say in confidence even to these mountains within whose shadows we walk : Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea—and lo ! it shall be done. Thus have I heard the Master talk of faith ; thus, O Cheliel, friend of mine, is my faith in him."

There was a deep but quiet conviction in this young girl's speech that was irresistible. It inspired enthusiasm, even though it might not create belief, and Bar-Asha found himself drawing a new strength and a firmer hope from her unfaltering trust. All enwrapped in the high thoughts and nobler aspirations to which the interchanging words gave rise, maid and youth walked slowly on until, drawn farther and yet farther from the region about the Galilean lake, they sat down to rest within one of the cool rock-retreats that dotted the region through which ran the highway that led from the cities of the Decapolis to Damascus and the farther Palmyra.

Pity, which is the gateway of interest, is often the open door for love. And sympathy, as well, is love's highway, over which all who travel reach at last the goal of real affection if they be not turned aside by the finger-posts of selfishness or indifference.

The tender concern of the sweet daughter of Jairus in the fortunes and in the future of the son of Asha, awoke in him the return which a yielding nature is quick to extend toward those who show it interest or favor.

Bar-Asha's experience thus far had been both harsh and hard. Patriotism had been but a losing pleasure ; valor but a grudging paymaster. His plan had worked but little good ; his schemes had, all too sadly, gone agley.

The merchant of Chorazin was his friend. In that connection alone might be found advancement and improved condition. This fair young daughter of the north who walked so confidingly by his side was one in whose company and counsel one such as he could find both strength and comfort.

His heart, quick to find its readiest promptings in that which was its closest environment, went out more and more in attachment to this gentle companion, counsellor, and friend. Gratitude aroused interest and interest awoke love. Of what use was it further to wrestle with fate? What to him could be striving that gave no greater return than martyrdom, aspirations toward power that brought him only the penalties of sedition or a life of outlawry? Here, in the favor of Jair, the generous merchant, here, in the love of Adah, might be found quiet, peace, and rest, a nobler living and a happier life. To struggle seldom meant to succeed. A gentle wife, a loving home were better far than could ever be an

uncertain triumph, a perilous palace, an impossible throne.

Opportunity is the heart's quickest spur to action. Beside it memory falls away and higher duty lags. The tender words that fell from Bar-Asha's lips did but convey the sentiments that were really born of the heart yearnings of this typical son of Issachar—"he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant"; the land of love is always a good and pleasant country, and vows of fealty are all too quickly spoken when one regards only the present and its promptings.

Love's preoccupation is the very apotheosis of absent-mindedness. Lost to all other thoughts save those of their own developing affections, the twain had wandered on, unmindful of distance, of surroundings, or the stern moralities of Jewish custom. Self was sunk in self; prudence was lost in the clasp of hand, the touch of cheek and lip.

The purity of love is often the reason for its greatest abandon. To give is to give utterly and unquestionably. Bar-Asha's winning ways brought heaven and hope to Adah, who in him had found her heart's desire. Nimbused all about with the halo of a blissful present they two, within the grateful shadow of the lava caves of the Jauran, plighted to each other troth and faith.

Unheeded the hours sped away. Love filled the day alone, and visions of the future that was to be their own grew fairer and more roseate with each new word of trust.

Hark! A cry as if for help rings out upon the highway below them. A clatter of hoofs as if of a riderless or an unmanageable steed clangs on the basalt blocks that form the ascending road.

Spite of Adah's detaining hand, which would hold him back from any possible danger, Bar-Asha, quick to act, springs from his companion's side and hurries to the roadway. From the south, straight toward him, dashes a galloping horse, broken beyond control, furious to unseat the encumbering form that clings, yet may not curb it. The rider is a woman. With veil and head-dress streaming on the wind, clutching desperately at the broken bridle rein, yet uttering neither call nor cry, she maintains with difficulty her fast-losing hold upon mane and bridle and slipping saddle.

She sees Bar-Asha. Help! is all she says, and that more in command than in entreaty or appeal.

With a bound Bar-Asha is in the middle of the highway. His uplifted arm checks for but an instant the mad flight of the runaway. It is but for an instant, indeed; for with a sudden swerve to the left and with a vicious plunge the horse is off once more. But even as Bar-Asha springs to clutch the streaming bridle, the half halt and the sudden plunge unseat the rider altogether, and with an utter loss of all control now that help is near, she falls fainting into the young Jew's strong and ready arms.

The riderless steed gallops up the highway in the full freedom of unrestraint. Bar-Asha carries the drooping form of her whom he has rescued to where, within the shadow of the lava cave, Adah waits to restore her.

Tenderly and with gentle solicitude the daughter of Jairus passes her arm beneath the nerveless form that Bar-Asha lays at her side. Deftly she draws away the entangled veil and head-dress from the stranger's face. The eyes slowly open, the lips move, the rescued woman lifts herself as if to sit upright.

But see; why does Bar-Asha's face blanch even beneath the stain of his swart Arabian disguise? Why does he stagger backward, clutching as if for some support? Why—this is the very Nemesis of fate! For there before him, linked with encircling arms upon the black floor of the lava cave of the Jauran, he sees the two women to whom alike he has pledged troth and faith—Amina, the Princess of Arabia, and Adah, daughter of Jair.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPELL OF BEAUTY.

"AMINA—Princess!"

The cry was an involuntary one, forced from Bar-Asha's unwilling lips by the surprise of that recognition and the startling significance of the moment.

"What! son of Asha! Were you then my deliverer? Cheliel, dear to my heart! The gods indeed are very good to me. It was you I sought; you I came to find, and lo! you have rescued me from danger, perhaps from death. Scarce could I hope for so great a joy. Scarce could I—but hold! Why do I find you here, housed in a cave, hiding and in disguise? And who—why, who is this woman, sharing your retreat? Speak, I say. Son of Asha, answer me the truth."

There can be few seasons in a man's life more perplexing or more fraught with moral danger than when he finds himself at bay before an outraged heart—forced to a confession or an explanation in presence of the two women in all the world whom he has professed to love. It tests the courage of the boldest; it tries the ingenuity of the most politic dissembler. And, pushed thus to the wall, Bar-Asha was neither politic nor bold.

Stunned by the overwhelming complexity of the situation, his wayward heart took refuge in its native coward-

ice. He was silent. But his eye fell before the masterful demand of the Arabian. His manliness spent itself in surrender. His resolution fell to the dust.

And Adah held her peace. Knowing nothing of this sudden light upon Bar-Asha's past, she sat silent in her surprise where the Arabian woman had risen from her side. The situation was one that her pure and loyal soul could neither grasp nor fathom.

But Amina, the princess, was both worldly-wise and shrewd. At once she divined the cause of Bar-Asha's silence and the nature of his companionship. At once, too, she determined, by all those arts that only an ambitious and scheming woman can possess, to win Bar-Asha from this new allegiance and bring him back to her.

And first, in splendid wrath, she flamed out into denunciation ; then, as suddenly, did she drop into tender and amorous appeal. With eyes that uttered even more than lips expressed ; with hands that were eloquent in action, and with all the silent swayings of a lithe and lissom form—at once seductive, fascinating, unmanning —the Arabian charmer cast about the wavering heart of this unstable son of Issachar the subtle spell of her most glowing beauty. Before her arts purpose fell away and desire grew more strong. The hot blood that Adah's gentle love had calmed into quietude surged again through eager and throbbing veins, made more ardent with Amina's every word, while the promise of her power, her station, and her wealth, flung thus freely at his feet, gave new life to a soul that was fast sinking under the burden of defeat into the old listlesssness of his kinsfolk.

"Choose you this day, this hour, Cheliel Bar-Asha,"

the princess said at last; "choose you this day which of us two shall be your guide to glory. Shall yonder spiritless girl, who knoweth naught of the power that gilds the life of princes or the wealth that strews the ways of kings; shall this custom-hampered Jewish maiden, with downcast eyes and fast-imprisoned tongue, who has never done aught but spin the homely flax or fill the pointed pitcher, who can never do more than make the hovel that must roof you both the home of drudgery, of poverty, and toil; shall she, my Cheliel, be able to bring to their fulfilling all those dreams of glory—ay! or any one of them—that we have woven for your future, or all the grandeur and the rank that must be his who is to be a prince in Israel in the days that are to come? Hearken, son of Asha. A princess of Arabia, daughter of kings and consort of nobles, bends herself to link her fate with yours. Refuse my offer, and what do you become? An outcast, an outlaw, a hunted fugitive, a tracked and slinking robber of the hills, houseless, homeless, powerless, resting forever under the ban of Rome and the proscription of the usurping curs of Edom. Accept, and my father's army shall be at the beck of the hero of Gamala's fight; soldiers and chariots shall rally around you as about their leader; palaces, soft raiment, music, power, and love, shall be yours at command, and in the triumph-days not far distant, Cheliel, the son of a crown, Bar-Asha, heir of kings, shall march in conquest to the throne of his ancestors, the favored of fortune, the bridegroom of a queen. Choose ye, my own, my love, my Cheliel—chiefest to me among ten thousand, excellent as the cedars of Lebanon, terrible in triumph as an army, an army with banners—choose ye, even now, be-

tween poverty and disgrace with her who sitteth yonder so empty of words, so childish of face ; between her and wealth, honor, rank, and glory with me—with me, a woman born to command, a woman worthy of your mighty future—with me, your love, your bride, your queen."

The onset was so sudden, the contrast so emphatic, the prophecy so brilliant, the charm so subtly spread and so deftly traversed out, the look so full of loving, the words so great with promise that, as many another man has done before him—yes, and has done since—the son of Asha, without protesting, listened ; and listening, fell. Strong neither in purpose nor in will, filled with the hope of power and sapped by the canker of ambition that eats into the heart and soul as well, the wavering Bar-Asha yielded to the spell of beauty that few men are enough Ulysses-like to finally resist. Drawing within his own the outstretched hands of the Princess of Arabia, without so much as a look of affection or a word of farewell for the stricken maiden of Chorazin, he deserted the daughter of the merchant for that of the king. With an arm entwined about the graceful and yielding form of her who had so deftly drawn him from his latest love, he withdrew from the shadows of that lava cave of the Jauran and walked slowly down to where her wondering escort, searching for their eccentric mistress, waited upon the basalt highway—the road that led back to Arabia and to the gleaming palace of the 'Aretas amid the sculptured rocks of the Red City of the south. The Princess Amina had worked her purpose artfully and well.

And Adah ! What of her. Sunk in the shame of the deepest disgrace that any pure-souled woman can ever know—the humiliation of desertion and disdain,—she

flung herself prone on the floor of that darkening rock-retreat among the eastern hills, dazed, discarded, utterly miserable.

This man for whom she gladly would have died, to whom she had poured out all the love of her trusting young heart and all the hope of her bright young life, whose words of love returned, only but now echoing in her ears, were become as apples of Sodom, whose heart was faithless and whose ways beneath contempt—see! she would crush him from her heart, her memory, her life. She would never think of him again, but would seek balm in the words of him who only was her Lord, the Messias who alone had spoken those words of tenderest comfort: Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Comfort—rest! Who needed these more deeply than she? The hot words of reply that she would have made to that fiery Arabian woman, and which she could not speak for very surprise at the suddenness of the situation, for very shame at the baseness of the fickle son of Asha—those hot and angry words that now sprung to her lips died away in sobs of grief and in the hope of comfort from the great-hearted, the tender, the divine Rabbi, her Master and her Lord. To him she would go. His works she would do. His steps she would follow. And as for this heartless son of Asha, this false and faithless one to whom she had plighted her tender troth, only to be discarded and contemned—see! she would crush him from her heart even as she crushed and flung away the withered blossoms of the brilliant oleander flowers, with which, to the accompaniment of loving words, he had wreathed her hair.

Crushed and flung away! And yet, as alone and all forlorn, she turned her steps westward toward her home beyond the glittering lake, her heart still sang Cheliel, her eyes still saw but Cheliel, her faith still clung to him. Lost to me, yet he will come again—this was her constant refrain. For still she loved him; and true love dies not even beneath the direst disgrace. From the ashes of hope new hope forever springs, pushing aside the blinding mists of loss, of trouble, and of tears. And true love is the perfect flower of hope.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COUNSEL OF A KING.

ONCE again Bar-Asha the Jew found himself within the palace of the kings at Petra. Freed from his disguises, clothed as of old in the royal raiment of a wealthy court, honored of the great, flattered, petted, praised, the guest of a king, the companion of a soldier, the loved of a princess—he, to whom praise was as sweet incense and dreams of glory were as the breath of life, felt himself a man once more, and blessed the fair Arabian who had saved him from himself, from danger, from outlawry, and from a listless love.

He had told his story again and yet again. His friends, the Arabians, had praised him for his spoiling of the Roman centurion, honored him for the test of courage in the lion fight at Cæsarea Philippi, cheered him with warmest commendations for his gallant escape from the toils of the tetrarch.

"'Tis a right gallant fighter," the prince Maliku had cried enthusiastically. "Stay you with us, O brother, and we will make a war-man of you—a leader among our captains—a free-rider of the desert—a chieftain of ten thousand spears."

But "No," the princess had said. "The son of Asha has a still grander future in store. He is to be a great

one among the princes of Israel. There lies his future and his fortune."

Too often flattery seemeth to hold the true and genuine ring; too often, unto him who is far too willing, does overpraise seem simple sincerity. Bar-Asha felt himself a man among men once more. The idyl of Chorazin was forgotten. So variously do surroundings sway opinions; so notably do circumstances alter cases.

And now, once again in the inner council-chamber of the sculptured rock-palace of the 'Aretas in that fairy-like Red City of the south, where, on softest divans and with the richest of Oriental environments, comfort brought forth courage and made the harshest problems of the world without seem easy in the solving, the three were met again for counsel and decision.

Satisfaction sat upon the handsome face of the son of Israel; content and pride shone from the glorious eyes of Amina, the princess; but the old 'Aretas, stroking his long, gray beard, as was his wont when deep in musing or debate, said slowly:

"Out of valor springeth strength, my prince, and out of strength cometh power. The way seemeth plain enough to me, and yet, even as the mists of yonder desert make the sun look vaster than it really is, so doth mystery magnify danger. There is for me too much of mystery about the doings of this same Messias of your people—this king who hesitates to proclaim himself a king. Mayhap he doth delay too much. Opportunities do not wait. Occasion is bald behind, and he who catcheth not at the forelock oft loses the very captive that his spear hath cornered. Why doth this preacher-king of yours halt so in his action? Doth he think that

kingdoms are to be won by words alone, and thrones slid into on the healer's spittle? Your Messias may be all that you do claim, and yet, to my thinking, hidden valor is full as bad as cowardice."

"I do not question the ways of Messias, dark as they sometimes are to me, O king," Bar-Asha made reply. "He hath a divided people to unite. Some are even yet unconvinced, while there be even some who say that we who would force him to the throne of Israel are all wrong in our actions; that he is indeed a king, but that his kingdom is not of this world."

"Not of this world!" the impetuous old monarch broke out; "then, by the wonders of Od-dema, of what world is he king? Are there realms of which we know not, where thrones are to be had for the winning?"

"They who reason thus—fools or dreamers I do hold them all to be—do say, O king," Bar-Asha replied, "that Messias seeks to establish his kingdom over the hearts of men, in the realm of air, in the land of spirits."

"The lands of fools, say I," again the old 'Aretas cried, filled with a royal disdain. "Nay, then, but I am tired with all the pratings of your Jewish babblers who talk of what they know not as if they knew it all. Ask me not to be friend and ally to djins and ghosts and spirits of the air. This world is full enough of bodily fighters to suit my way of war. Have done with those who make such sport of a golden opportunity, or else have done with me. And yet it may be that even these dreamers may be made to serve our ends. A fool is the wise man's ladder, boy. Let us mount to triumph even on the backs of such babblers as are these. See you; even now that old fox, the Antipas, hath the lips of his

gossip-mongers in far-off Rome whining his woes into the ears of his lord the Emperor, seeking to stir him up against me because of your gallant victory at Gamala. But let them both beware. Dab-el the 'Aretas, King of Nabat and Chieftain of the Deserts, fears neither tetrarch nor cæsar, fox nor wolf. Nothing is unconquerable to the brave nor invulnerable to the bold. Be you both brave and bold, my prince, and the victory shall be yours."

"And your counsel is——"

"To strike and strike quickly," the old king replied. "Yet not unaided may we make the test. Rashness is not valor, and foolhardiness is a ladder that oft doth break the neck of him who mounts thereby. Go back to your people, my son. Seek out this Messias on whom you so mightily rely—this would-be king whose ways I cannot fathom. Gain from him some sign or word or promise on which we may hang our action. Then stir up your robber friends of the hills. Bid them strike for Israel when all their beacon fires are alight. Join their forces to those of your halting king. And then, when all is ready, shall you find that the 'Aretas is even more ready than are you. Revolt shall link arms with invasion. We will strike at every point of vantage from Jerusalem to Tiberias, and westward even to the shores of the Great Sea. Upon the shoulders of success shall your Messias climb upward to his throne. Arabia shall be revenged, asking nothing from Israel's conquests nor of Israel's lands. And the son of Asha shall be doubly a prince, the hero of his people, the son of Arabia. But if you hope for the help of the 'Aretas, show him something that can claim his help. It is not a basket of hay, but a basket of flesh that makes the lion spring."

The enthusiasm of the old warrior-king was contagious. The eyes of Amina flashed out her wish for war, and in the soul of Bar-Asha a fierce desire for instant action, for the clash of arms and the opportunity for valor, burned with all the ardor of a youthful fighter and a would-be hero.

"I pledge you my word, my faith, my life, O king," he cried; "Messias shall give to you assurance of his kingly claim, the bands of the hills shall light their beacon fires, and Israel shall join with Arabia to free the land from the hirelings of Edom and the butchers of Rome."

But even as his pledges grew most impressive, and his valor flamed at its highest, the curtains slowly parted, and into the presence of the 'Aretas came the imposing form of Magalath the Magian.

Doubly impressive with his weight of years and his sweeping beard of snow, the old star-priest bent in the deep and courteous salaam of the Orient toward the wearer of the Nabatæan crown.

"Your pardon, O king," he said. "From my watch-tower yonder through the night I saw, low down in the western sky, the lord of the first house and the lord of the sixth house in close conjunction. And as I read the signs, by nim and clif, this union telleth me that one is near at hand on whom all wishes centre. Is it Zosiosh or his herald? Is it Messias or his messenger, I ask? What stranger hath come within the court of the 'Aretas, my master and my friend?"

"The messenger indeed hath come, O worthy Magalath," the king made answer. "Lo, even there he stands; the valiant Jew who won the triumph at Gamala, the brave young son of Asha."

Another deep genuflexion the star-priest made toward the one he sought. "All hail, O noble youth," he said; "peace be with you, son of Asha! What tidings of your Lord and mine? Hath his kingdom come at last?"

"Not as yet, O venerable father," Bar-Asha replied. "But come it shall, and that right speedily. Even now hath the noble 'Aretas pledged us his support. The day of Roman downfall and of Israel's deliverance is at hand. And when the beacon fires shall flame alight on all the hills of Israel, when Messias shall have joined us with his following and his mighty power, then indeed——"

"Peace, peace, O babbler!" the old magian cried, breaking in so sternly upon Bar-Asha's flow of words that king and princess started in surprise, and the young Jew, their guest, flushed deeply as he heard. "Here is nothing new. Have I waited but for this? Have I watched the stars course nightly o'er the far Judean hills but for vain repetitions like to these? Long months ago you did promise us the same. Gamala won, the hosts of Herod overthrown, victory in your grasp, what were you then to do? Peace!—I can recall your words: To seek the alliance of Messias, to work out the disgrace of the Antipas, the spoiling of Rome, the deliverance of Israel, the foundation of the new kingdom of the Jews. These were high promises, yet do I now hear them all again—promises still. O faithless, faltering one, is the doing still to be done? Have you yet no word of promise from the Lord, your king; no glorious march toward triumph; no sign of the incoming kingdom of the Jews? Where is the pledge of power you were to gain? Where is that treasure of Gerizim to which you held the key?"

The voice of the old magian grew even more stern as he pressed his questions home. The eyes of the youth fell in dismay before this recital of pledges unfulfilled, while the face of the princess showed the tinge of pity, and even the king interposed in his behalf.

"Nay, nay, my good Magalath," the 'Aretas said; "you are too hasty with our brave young prince. Here is no easy task set for him to do. The hasty angler oft doth lose the fish, and even you, who long have spent your nights pointing at the stars, may not pull them down."

"Pull them down I may not, noble king," the magian replied with bitterness; "else had I no need for such weak fools as yonder babbling boy. Were it but mine to draw the stars to earth then would the gods walk with men once more, and we who strive for man's eternal bettering would be but babes ourselves. But the gods walk not among us. Through long, long years on Persian heights and on Arabian plains have I waited for but one—the Oshanderbegha, deliverer, redeemer, Lord of all the world, the king foretold by that wide-flaming star as we who watched it, wondering, bent in reverence upon the Tower of Victory. And now that he is near, now when my sands of life are wellnigh fully run, now when he whom I am fated to see but once before I die lags in his triumph because of the faintheartedness of those who do most loudly prate of loyalty and faith, should I not, O king, be wroth and weary at the faithlessness of men? A whole world waits for the brightness that must shine from the throne of the Anointed One. And yet, even they who believe falter in their duty to raise him to that throne."

Valorous words are like a gas-filled ball. They bound and rebound far above one's head, but only those that stand the test of service at the bat are worthy of the player's skill. Once punctured, they fall spent and useless to the earth.

So it was with Bar-Asha. His valiant promises of the past had stood no test of real devotion to Messias' cause. His high-sounding words were of small avail if they brought no harvest in. And now his stern arraignment by this wise old magian, this earnest watcher for the truth, brought his latest boastings winged and fluttering to the ground.

The friendship of a king, the love of a princess, his own glowing future, perhaps, hung in the balance. Already, under the searching words of Magalath the Magian, the gleam of faith that had lighted the faces of his friends seemed darkening into the clouds of doubting and concern. His action must be quick. His words must be decisive.

"Nay, you do wrong me foully," he cried hotly, facing the grim old magian. "What I have done hath been indeed for Messias' cause—though it hath had but little weight with him, though to you it seemeth rather to have been for my cause than for his. Hear me all. This very day will I turn my face westward toward my people and achieve Messias' glory, or fall bravely at his side. Bid me, O king, to horse and off. I stay not longer in your palace here if my deeds are to be doubted or my faith is held as light. Princess, farewell! First, for Gerizim; and then for Jerusalem and my king!"

And, ever as hot in action as quick to change, ever as impatient of criticism as listless under content, the son

of Asha, ere the sun had set, was speeding westward toward Gerizim and his test of fate.

But Amina, the princess, knew the shifting nature of her lover far too well. Quick to decide and prompt to act, fearless of danger and determined not again to let him slip from her control, she, too, ere he had been many hours on his way, was with her slender escort and her fleetest steeds following on Bar-Asha's track westward to the Samaritan hill-top that held her fate and his.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TREASURE-HUNT ON GERIZIM.

Out from the western gate of one of the oldest cities in the world—a place "too old for ruins," builded and rebuilded and yet again renewed, called Neapolis—the new city—by its Roman architects and Shalem by its earliest kings—went Cheliel Bar-Asha, climbing the eastern slope of Gerizim.

For him the crowding buildings of the flourishing city, the glorious prospect opening from its encircling hills, the verdant valleys and enchanting surroundings of this "paradise of the Holy Land," held but small attraction. What to him that those lofty precipices on Gerizim that overhung the city had, centuries before, echoed back the tremendous Amen! with which all the congregation of the wandering tribes of Israel received Joshua's reading of the law? What to him were those green-crested hill-slopes "over against Ebal" where, in the olive groves of Tirzah the beautiful, were laid the bones of his valiant ancestor—that Bar-Asha who had been a mighty king in Israel? Neither lovely landscape nor lofty legend, nor his own princely lineage had thought or care from him. One idea only filled his mind, one purpose directed his upward-mounting steps—to find that hidden treasure of Moses to which he alone held the key.

What this treasure might consist of, how or why it should have been concealed by the great Law-giver whose wandering feet had never trodden this most beautiful of mountain slopes, he neither knew nor cared. The treasure hunter, possessed of his mania for unearthing hidden wealth, has small concern for those who accumulated the coveted riches or for those who placed them beneath rock or wave. "Covetousness," says the Dutch proverb, "is never satisfied until its mouth is filled with dirt." The dross that crowds out generosity, candor, and trust from the mind of man is the first spadeful of dirt turned up by the treasure-hunter.

So Bar-Asha thought only of his quest. The scroll had told of a treasure hidden somewhere beneath the shadow of the stones that Joshua had reared for a remembrance. Somewhere beneath the temple of the dead Samaritans, the scattered ruins of which had for generations strewn the top of their sacred mountain, lay the wealth he sought. The wording of the mystic scroll that Magalath the Magian had so unwittingly deciphered for him had burned themselves into his memory. He could never forget them. Let him but find the twelve stones that marked his starting-point, and he would not barter his chances of success for all the thunders of that mighty Law of which they stood as a memorial.

Slowly he mounted the steepening slope of Gerizim. The mid-day sun blazed down upon him, but he, a child of the Syrian land, cared little for its blazing fervor. Even more fiercely burned his ardor and desire.

He gained the top. There on the small, level plateau that crests the "sacred mountain of the Gerizites" lay strewn the ruins of that old, old temple reared ages back

by Sanballat the Horonite and overthrown by Hyrcanus the Hasmonæan, full seven-score years before. Its foundations, so men said, were those very stones that the prophet-king of old, Melchizedek, "King of Shalem and priest of the most high God," had builded his tarrying place or "palace" upon. Nay, more; within that same foundation, so men also said, could be seen the twelve great stones which Joshua set up after the reading of the Law. And these Bar-Asha sought.

With eager eyes, with feverish haste he studied those well-nigh shapeless ruins. Almost at his feet lay the sloping rock that no man dare approach save with unsandalled feet, for upon it once uprose the altar of the living God. Over against the eastern edge of the plateau stood the very stones upon which, the true believers affirmed, Abraham by faith offered up his best beloved Isaac as a sacrifice to his God. To the west, sheltered by the fair Samaritan hills, rose, in the Greek city of Sebaste, the glorious palace of marble colonnades reared by the elder Herod. Farther to the north, between the rifts of pass and gorge, sparkled the distant waters of the Great Sea. But neither holy relic, palace, sea, nor gorge gained look or thought from the all-absorbed seeker after hidden wealth. With eyes searching every nook and cranny, every cleft and fissure, every mass of crumbling rock, and every sheer drop of overhanging precipice, Bar-Asha climbed and crawled about those shapeless ruins.

Again and again he imagined himself successful only to find no reason for his hope. And still with each discouragement new hope sprung afresh; until, behold! there on the eastern crest, even where the hill "goeth down to the place of Shalem," as the scroll did read, he counted and re-counted, and, all in trembling expecta-

tion, re-counted yet again, upon a solid platform of unhewn masonry, twelve stones of bluish-gray, set back eight inches, at least, from the line of their three underlying courses. And yet for the fourth time did he check them off. It must be right. Here were "the twelve stones in the fourth course of the palace of King Melchizedek where Joshua setteth up the law." Alleluia! It was the first step toward victory.

He wiped away the beaded perspiration that, born of excitement rather than of the noonday heat, stood upon his brow. With cautious minuteness he measured off toward the west, the "forty cubits less one," and then sat down to await the passing of the sun which, "two hours after midday," should bring out in shadow the figure of a running man.

The moments crept but slowly on. Ages they seemed to this anxious watcher bent on his quest for fortune.

Time moves but slowly when one, weighted with the burden of a great anxiety, or a greater hope, watches its flight. But it moves. And now the allotted time is up. It is full two hours past the midday. Bar-Asha studies the growing shadow of every rock and stone. One there is in particular, near to the spot where the limit of his measurement of nine and thirty cubits falls, that he has marked as the one of all others most precious to him—a high black boulder, seared with the marks of storm and time, a very patriarch of the rocks.

He watches it more closely. Yes; he is right. The sun, standing toward the west, sends slanting rays upon the patriarch's head, and there, at last, plainly outlined upon the broken surface of the ground stands sharply out the unmistakable shadow of "a running man."

The tell-tale shadow falls squarely upon a moss-grown

slab that none would notice save as one sought it out—a square, flat, time-stained, ragged stone imbedded in its surrounding earth. Bar-Asha stoops above it; he digs and loosens the earth all about it; his trembling hands grasp it on either side; all his strength, wrought up to the trial, goes out toward his task of unearthing it; he tugs and strains to lift it from its bed of ages; it gives, it yields, it starts—and then, all unmanned and unnerved as he feels himself upon the verge of some great discovery, Bar-Asha starts in mingled terror, anger, and a guilty fear of detection as upon his shoulder, at that very instant, falls the light touch of an unexpected hand.

The touch is but a light one, yet to him, overwrought with expectancy and desire, it seems heavy with the weight of destiny. Is he to lose his prize on the very eve of discovery? He loosens his hold upon the yielding stone. With fist tightly clenched in sudden passion, with an angry exclamation and the flush of rage upon his face, he looks up to see who has thus broken in upon his absorbing labors. His eyes, full of a dangerous light, meet those of the one who now looks down upon him. Anger dies away into wonder—guilty fear into reassuring love. It is the Princess Amina.

Reaction always follows an interrupted tension. With nerves unstrung and a hysterical laugh of relief Bar-Asha sank upon the ground, trembling in every limb.

"Amina!" he cried.

"Why; did you think me djin or afrit, O my prince," the Arabian laughingly said; "or am I the ghost of some one of your old patriarchs or prophets of Israel risen from the past to defend his hidden hoard? Do you think I would let you face danger—or success—alone? But,

tell me: is it right? Have you found the stone the scroll did bid you seek?"

"It is here, it is here," Bar-Asha made answer; "wait but until my shattered strength that you so struck to earth comes back to me again. So!" and he drew a long breath of reassurance, "I am myself once more."

Again he bends above the moss-grown slab. With tug and strain he labors to unearth it. It yields again, it loosens its hold upon the companion stones, it rises—higher, higher yet; there, it is overthrown! And in its place a black and yawning void lies beneath those four straining, wondering eyes.

"Behold! the treasure cave," Bar-Asha joyously exclaimed. "Light you the torch, O princess, while I prepare for the descent."

As he spoke Bar-Asha handed to the Arabian the prepared torch which, until this moment, had been fastened to the end of his long staff. It was smeared with the inflammable *zapeth*, or asphalt pitch, and its slowly smouldering end was protected from the air by the *cad* or earthen pitcher that capped it. Drawing from his girdle the stout rope that until now he had carried there, he tied to one end a heavy stone and sounded, as with a plummet, the black hole beneath his feet. The rock speedily touched bottom, and without an instant's hesitation Bar-Asha dropped into the pit.

"Safe going!" he cried reassuringly, looking up into the princess' face. "Will you follow me?"

"To the end," Amina stoutly declared. Withdrawing the protecting *cad* from the smouldering end of the torch, she quickly fanned it into a blaze, and, as unhesitatingly as had her companion, she, too, sprang down into the pit.

Bar-Asha took the torch from the princess and by its flickering light they saw stretching before them a narrow fissure leading down into the earth. Fearless though curious, the twain slowly felt their way along the narrow path, which, after leading them downward perhaps a hundred yards, suddenly swerved to the left. Rounding this turn in the path, they carefully felt their way for another hundred yards and then Bar-Asha, with a wave of his torch, set the places alight, and both at once uttered a cry of wonder and surprise.

They stood within a natural rock chamber, high and broad. The roof and sides of the cavern, here a bluish-gray or there of a light cream tint, seemed to sway and pulse with every flare of the torch. The floor was dotted with numerous little pools of slowly running water, as if fed by some subterranean spring. But what threw the most of excitement and wonder into their simultaneous cry was the sight at the farther side of the cavern of a hand-piled rampart of stones, much like the cairn or cache of our latter-day explorers in the frozen north.

The flaring torch touched with light every point and peak of the environing rock and cast fantastic shadows to the right and left. Carefully picking their way among the intervening pools, they hastened to the pile of stones, and soon Bar-Asha's eager hands were tearing down the cairn, while the Arabian held the torch, with frequent wavings keeping it aflame. One by one the loosely piled stones dropped away and fell at their feet.

"The torch, the torch, my princess! hold it close!" Bar-Asha cried with an intensity of glee. "See! the scroll was right. Now, praise unto the Lord of Hosts; my fortune lieth here!"

By flash and flame and flickering rush of light they peered downward into the uncovered cairn. The rays from the torch fell with piercing radiance into the secret store and returned to them a gleaming, sparkling flash from glittering metal massed in close array. Spellbound they gazed upon their "find." Ancient flagons of silver and of gold, amphoras, caskets, urns and coffers, with arks of ebony overlaid with ivory and gold, seemed fairly bursting with the wealth that they contained. There beneath their eyes lay all the glittering display, the promise of untold wealth, of power, and of fame.

Eagerly they hung above the treasure. Wonder, cupidity, greed, and joy first held them captive, then the realization of their wishes rushed upon them, and, locked in a sudden embrace, they pledged anew, above the heap of riches—the hidden treasures of the old-time priests of the Lord—their vows of love, of constancy and faith.

But how often does that never-expected slip live between cup and lip? Already Bar-Asha's hands are upon the coveted treasure, already he plunges his clutching fingers deep into one of the largest of the amphoras. The princess leans lovingly, expectantly above him. And then—a treacherous stone beneath her feet turns under her unsteady weight; it turns, and she, thrown suddenly off her balance, clutches at the empty air for support; the lighted torch falls from her opened hand, and rolling away drops into one of the lurking pools, flickers, sputters, and dies out into the blackest of darkness.

The successful treasure-hunters, even with their hands upon their long-desired booty, are alone and in densest darkness deep down beneath the summit of Gerizim. Their one torch has failed them and cannot be relighted.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I AM HE."

DARKNESS is a wonderful dispeller of enthusiasm. He who gropes therein finds what he would not, and finds not what he would.

With the last flicker of the dying torch Bar-Asha drew his hands, empty of treasure, from out the filled amphora. The Arabian, losing all interest in coffer, ark, or urn, inveighed loudly against the treacherous stone that had caused her untimely fall, and felt blindly about, first for Bar-Asha's hand, and next for some security for her own unguided feet.

"Have you aught with which to renew the torch if so be we may find it again, my Cheliel?" she asked.

And the disconcerted son of Asha was forced to admit that, in providing himself with material for his treasure-hunt, he had taken neither a fresh supply of the inflammable *zapeth* or the useful oil, nor had he furnished himself with a second torch to replace the one thus lost to him. In those far-off days, when matches were yet nineteen centuries in the future and the use of flint and steel was all unknown, he whose light went out had but little hope to conquer the darkness if he had at hand neither "live fire" nor material for a flame.

"It were most unwise in you, son of Asha," the

princess said with something of censure in her voice, "to come thus unprepared for such an accident far below the ground."

And Bar-Asha made reply with quite as much of sharpness in his tone: "Had I but held the torch, O princess, such an accident, as you do call it, could not have occurred. Curiosity was ever the woman's curse, even from the days of our mother Eve, and has upset worse even than torches ere this day of stupidity."

But censure and recrimination light no torches and show no path out of a labyrinthine darkness. Grumbling much, Bar-Asha crawled about on hands and knees to find the fallen torch, but only blundered ever into the wrong pool, or bruised himself upon the jagged rocks for his labor and his pains.

"It profiteth little to seek for that which is possessed," he said at length, as, the last shred of his patience worn away, he rose from his fruitless search. "Get we forth from this place of devils, princess, and when next we come it shall be with light enough to ward against fall and folly. Nor may we, indeed, bear away from hence much of the noble treasure we have found. It will need all our skill to find our way forth in this worse than night, and an urn or chest of gold would be but an unwieldy burden. We know the spot. The treasure is ours for the taking. We can return, better furnished for its disposing, for here is enough of treasure to call for the help of slaves and beasts of burden to bear it safely off. 'T is a sorry ending to our first day's search, but we have found the treasure! And that is surely good fortune enough to pay for one day's trouble."

So, making light of their present discomfiture, Bar-

Asha tied about Amina's waist and then about his own, the rope that still hung at his girdle, and bade her follow cautiously after while he lead the way.

With much groping about in that great black cavern, with many stumbles, with much floundering about in unsuspected pools, and with more than one slip and fall, Bar-Asha felt his way along the encircling wall until at last, by sheer good-luck, he came upon the passage out and so clambered up to daylight. How pleasant, how priceless, almost, seemed even that hot Syrian sunlight! They were saved from the curse of darkness—but they had left their treasure behind.

Carefully replacing the slab in the cavity from which they had raised it, and marking well the spot so that, when next he came to it, he could go to work without waiting for the shadow of the running man to show him the secret way to fortune, Bar-Asha left the scene of his success and failure, and with the princess at his side took his way downward toward the old city at the foot of Gerizim.

But as they neared the town they took separate ways. They were among strange surroundings and in a hostile land. The hatred of Jew and Samaritan burned too fiercely to carelessly invite inquiry or arouse suspicion. The attendants of the Arabian princess awaited their mistress near the city gate, and there Bar-Asha left her. He, himself, skirting the town, turned his steps toward the highway that led to the north and passed beyond the city near to Jacob's Well and Joseph's Tomb.

He would rest awhile by Jacob's Well and recover from the exertions and excitements of this most exciting day. But as he approached he noted two figures resting

against the stone coping that encircled that deep and sparkling well—a man and a woman. Even with the desire for refreshment strong upon him, the traditional hatred of the Jew toward the Samaritan interfered to keep him from even appearing in the society of these loiterers by the well, much less to ask for a drink from the pointed pitcher which he saw in the woman's hands. To such an extent did the antagonism of these rival neighbors of a kindred stock force themselves. "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

Strange. This very thought that held him from the well came floating to his ears in words from the woman's lips. He paused, wondering and curious. He looked at the speaker more closely. The freedom of look, of speech and manner, the golden crescent of the heathen Ashtaroth that gleamed in her hair and held fast her head-dress, carelessly flung back from her face, all marked her as a Samaritan of the Samaritans, and of not most excellent repute at that. The inherited distrust of these renegade children of Israel brought the scowl to Bar-Asha's face. Who, then was this Jew who could so lower himself as to talk thus freely with so questionable a woman of Samaria?

Drawing nearer, still other scraps of conversation were borne in upon him.

"Sir," he heard the woman say; "I know that the Messias cometh, that is called the Christ. When he is come he will tell us all things."

And back came the startling reply, setting Bar-Asha's heart all aflame, filling his eyes with a surprise that grew to amazement, opening his soul for the entrance of a deep and marvellous joy:

"*I that speak unto thee am He.*"

What! Was Messias here? In Samaria? Bar-Asha looked yet more closely. Once again, in spite of the travel-stained raiment and the wearied figure, he recognized the same never-to-be-forgotten face that had smiled back upon him by the gate of Nain, that had looked upon the centurion Vettius on the Capernaum highway, that had drawn forth the people's prayer for leadership upon the hill-slopes of Decapolis—the same slight, trim figure, the same clean-cut profile, the same wine-colored hair and beard, the same face, full of tenderness and pity, the same wonderful eyes. It was Messias' self; and he, Cheliel Bar-Asha, the lover and the soldier of the king, had heard from those royal lips the truth he had so long, so eagerly desired to hear. "I that speak unto thee am He!" I am Messias; I am the King of Israel. Strange, indeed, that to a woman of the hated race, rather than to the Sanhedrim of his own people, the nobles and rulers of the Jews, this marvellous declaration should be made.

Bar-Asha would have pressed forward and thrown himself at the Master's feet in adoration and reverence, but just then he noted coming from the city gates certain of the followers of the Lord, and among them the man who had come so often into his life for good or for ill—Juda Bar-Simon, the knifeman of Kerioth.

Through the throng that, following the companions of Messias from the city, now gathered about the weary wanderer by the well, Bar-Asha passed unnoticed and laid a hand upon the knifeman's arm. The man of Kerioth turned himself about. He encircled his friend with ready arms.

"What! Son of Asha; is it you? *Shalom!*" he said. "I have not seen you since that day beyond Galilee. What do you here?"

"Waiting for my fortune," Bar-Asha replied, with a double meaning in his speech of which Bar-Simon could know nothing. "Is it linked with the Master yet? May I not follow him?"

"What should hinder you?" Bar-Simon said; "and may you gain more of comfort than I yet have done. Bar-Asha, our cause lags sadly."

"And why?" Bar-Asha inquired, surprised to hear from one so sanguine a note of discontent. "See you not there a leader fitted for the mightiest cause?" And he looked toward the figure at the well, which now erect and noble once again was talking in strange guise to those of his followers who had thronged about him, beseeching him to eat. Bar-Asha caught the words:

"I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish his work. Say not ye: There are yet four months and then cometh harvest? Behold! I say unto you: Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest! and he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

"Hear you that?" Bar-Asha joyfully cried. "Despair not, son of Simon. The Master's harvest is at hand. You and I, good friend, shall receive our wages of power, of glory, and of pomp. And both he and we may rejoice together in our day of victory that is soon to come. See, even now I will plead with the Master for a promise in that eternal triumph."

And before Bar-Simon could stay him with restraining hand the son of Asha, full of enthusiasm, faith, and reverence, joined the little band about the well and cast himself in adoration at Messias' feet.

"Rabboni!" he cried; "thou that art eternal, thou whose empire is endless—tell me, oh, good master, tell me, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Surprised and yet moved by the impetuosity of this earnest youth, the gentle rabbi looked down at the suppliant.

"Why callest thou me good?" he asked mildly. "There is none good but One—that is God. But if thou wouldst enter into life keep the commandments."

"Dear Lord," said Bar-Asha, seeking for yet more noble and dangerous duties, "all these things I have kept from my youth up. Look upon me, Lord. Your touch raised me from death at the gate of Nain. Your word gave me life. Oh, take my life. Bid me to do some great deed for your help and glory. What lack I yet?"

Then the kingly teacher "beholding him loved him," and voiced the test that the young man desired:

"One thing then thou lackest. Go thy way; sell whatsoever thou mayst have and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure—in Heaven. And come! take up the cross and follow me."

Bar-Asha started from the ground grieved and sorrowing. He looked up into those eloquent eyes that looked downward into his. What! did the Master know how great this sacrifice must be? Sell whatsoever he had? Why, that meant the treasure that was now even as good as his, the treasure that was to give him

power and rank. Sell it and give the proceeds to the poor? Oh, he could not do that. He would fight for Messias, he would work for him. He would suffer for him—if need be he was ready to die for him,—but do away with all the treasure of Gerizim that had but just come into his possession? No, that was too much. Surely the Master did not know how much he was demanding; surely he tried him too severely. Dejected, dispirited, with the enthusiasm all taken from him, he turned from the well and "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

And as he went there fell upon his ears those even harsher words: "How hardly shall they that put their trust in riches enter into the kingdom."

Bar-Asha's first great test of faith had been but sorely met. It was not in the nature of a son of Issachar to throw away, just when he had achieved them, all of the "rest that was good and the land that was pleasant," simply for a promise of what?—poverty and a cross!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FOR ISRAEL.

THERE is a constancy in faith that lives down even its own discouragements. He who faces a great opportunity and falters before the sacrifice it demands, still loses no jot of confidence in that opportunity, though its winning be beset with obstacles and fraught with failures.

When, however, one who burns to make proof of his loyalty by some act of mighty heroism or world-inspiring courage finds himself instead commanded to a task unlovely and unheroic—when one who hoped to scale embattled ramparts is set to digging ditches, then is constancy sorely tried and sacrifice itself seems small and sordid. Unto far too many would-be heroes does duty seem degeneracy where self is sacrificed to denial.

Cheliel Bar-Asha looked to become a ruler, a power in his native land. He hoped to achieve this eminence through the medium of him who was to redeem Israel—this new Messias whom the people were ready to hail as king. And lo! when he reported for duty, all eager for action, all thrilling with the heroic, he was bidden to give to the poor all his most coveted possessions, that wonderful treasure he had found upon Gerizim, and instead of a sword to take up a cross.

Slowly and sadly he left the Samaritan valley, and turning his back upon the one who, beside the historic

Well of Jacob, he had heard proclaim himself Messias, the disappointed patriot aimlessly trod the highway that led toward Jerusalem, a day's journey to the south.

It is the will of Heaven, says the Arabian proverb, that virtue is proved by trials; and certainly to the discomfited Bar-Asha it seemed as though his virtue was being sorely tried. Twice now, within a single day, had hope been dashed to earth and ambition cruelly been checked. What was he to do? He must muse upon his troubles and seek solution in solitude.

But he was not to be long in solitude. Even before he had reached the shapeless ruins of Shiloh one whom he knew only too well had caught up with him upon the way; one whose influence over him was even stronger than his own desires, hailed him and bade him halt for counsel.

They threw themselves down in the shade of that noble tree still known as "Abraham's Oak," and then Bar-Simon said:

"Heed not too much Messias' words, O friend. He did but seek to try your faith, and heaven doth know he tries mine many a time and oft. And, truth to say, what trial, O son of Asha, is that which bids you do that you cannot if you would? Sell all your possessions, indeed! Why, what possessions have you save faith in your princely future and your strong right arm? Apart from that, which hath no rating with the merchants of our towns, how much would your substance bring at open sale, even if you bade the crier sell it for you in the public way beneath the bridge of the Xistus? Ho! not enough, I warrant me, to keep alive for but a single day one leper of all the ten the Master cured yonder in Samaria."

This unsuspected truth, spoken so in jest, cut more deeply into Bar-Asha's soul than any word flung out in anger could have pierced. For now he saw, by the very ignorance of the son of Simon, that Messias had the gift of reading the hearts of men, of knowing even their most secret plans, their most carefully guarded hopes. Fear took the place of distrust; wonder sat in the seat of regret.

What if this mysterious being, this reader of the thoughts of men, had intended to convey in those words of harsh import a promise of future grandeur which, all too hastily, he who heard with discouragement had thoughtlessly rejected? Dispose of these treasures for my cause, Messias may have meant, and you shall have, when once my kingdom is brought in, a greater treasure, a more royal wealth than any that the caverns of Gerizim can give to you.

Had he, then, made so mighty a mistake? Revolution needed money quite as much as men to make it successful. It might be that Messias knew that this means toward success lay within Bar-Asha's grasp. Sell all thou hast and give to the poor! The poor? What poor? Why, those very followers of Messias from among the common people who, their faith thus strengthened by gold, would rally with redoubled ardor for the great cause when its hour at last should come. Fool that he was thus to fail to understand so direct a suggestion! Fool that he was to thus cast aside so grand a promise of wealth and power! He had failed to stand even the very first test of loyalty that had been forced upon him. What footing would he have with Messias now? He must regain his lost opportunity by some great and glorious work for the Master.

So intent were his thoughts that he failed to hear Bar-Simon's further questionings. Only when the knifeman suggested action did he come to himself again.

"What shall it be?" he said. "See; I am ready."

"The work lags grievously," Bar-Simon answered. "My brethren of the hills grow restive under my continued messages of delay. Messias worketh in his own guise, but not to my liking. How can I arouse the fighting men to war when he speaks only words of peace and precept? How may I work vengeance upon the spoilers of Israel when he whom we would hail as leader and as king doth bid us love our enemies, do good to those that hate us, bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. And yet he is Messias. He only is Lord and King. There be those of our little company that are even now asking for seats to the right and left of his throne when he cometh to his glory. It behooveth us, son of Asha, to so lay our plans and to so guide our ways that none shall stand in advance of us when the day of glory comes. Do what he may to disturb my devisings and dull my seekings after revenge, I know that he is Messias, and that it is for us to cleave unto him, to fight for him, to triumph with him."

"Even with some mighty miracle, with some glorious showing of his wondrous power, may Messias usher in his day of triumph," Bar-Asha said, fired anew with the flush of hope and the desire to regain by some noble deed the ground he felt that he had lost. "Doubt not that he who can still the storms of Galilee with a word, heal the leper with a look, and with a touch call back the dead to life—doubt not that he may do marvellous things when the hour cometh that shall test his power. Shall not the hosts of Rome be blasted with a breath even as were the

ranks of the Assyrians as they lay beneath the walls of Jerusalem? Shall not the ramparts and the strong cities of the Herods—Tiberias the accursed and all the other homes of the Gentiles that they have reared—fall before the shouts of the soldiers of Messias even as did the walls of Jericho in the days of that earlier Jeshua, a leader and a prince in Israel? I say to you, son of Simon, that never was glory in Israel such as shall be when our Lord cometh to his kingdom."

But even as they talked Bar-Simon's practised ears caught the sound of galloping hoofs coming down the highway toward them as they lay beneath the Oak of Abraham. He looked quickly up.

"So; son of Asha! see who cometh on in haste. 'T is the Princess of Arabia," he said.

The hard-riding princess, as fearless as she was unconventional and free, came clattering toward the twain, followed by her slender escort, and drew bridle by Bar-Asha's side. It was not her policy to long lose sight of her ever-changing lover.

"Whither now, son of Asha?" she inquired. "I have sought for you all along the road from Neapolis even to Shiloh here. Our task cannot slacken. We must finish where we have begun."

"Trust me to be no laggard there, my princess," Bar-Asha replied. "But here is even more important work on hand. Messias' time draws nigh. It is for us, by some great move, to give him the aid we have agreed upon. What shall it be, Bar-Simon? You should tell us best."

"The son of Asha sayeth but the truth, O princess," Bar-Simon made reply. "The Master speaks in words

clothed with caution but with assurance none the less. 'Behold,' he said to us who follow close about him, 'we go up to Jerusalem and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.' His kingdom is at hand. Already is his face turned towards Jerusalem, and two of our band are sent on to Bethany there to prepare for him the ass upon which he is to ride in triumph through the gate of the Holy City. In that very act is promise of his victory and his glory; for what says the prophecy concerning Messias—even the prophecy of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo:

'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy king cometh unto thee:
He is just—and having salvation;
Lowly—and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt, the foal of an ass.
And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,
And the horse from Jerusalem,
And the battle-bow shall be cut off;
And he shall speak peace unto the heathen;
And his dominions shall be from sea to sea,
And from the river even to the ends of the earth!'

And what says the Rabbi Jarchi: 'This prophecy can be true of no one but Messias.' And even as the son of Asha here can testify, the Master hath declared this day: 'I am Messias; I am the Christ.' Truly the day of our salvation is at hand."

"And when comes this triumph of Messias?" asked Bar-Asha, now fully aroused to a new and burning ardor as, at last, the day of action seemed so near.

"Speedily; speedily, O friend," Bar-Simon replied. "Before the moon groweth to the full it shall be accomplished."

"Then haste we to help him, O princess!" Bar-Asha cried. "Lo! here is our work to do. Get you to your father, the 'Aretas, in the Red City, straight. Bid him to put his army in array and let his watchers strain their eyes each night for the signal-fires which shall give him word of our action and our need. When they shall flame on Gilead's topmost height and on the eastern hills of Moab then let him draw his forces out for battle. Let him march upon Tiberias; for there in the north shall his vengeance fall upon the hosts of the Antipas while we stir up all Judea and the folk about Jerusalem."

"And the treasure, son of Asha?" the princess whispered.

"It can wait our triumph," Bar-Asha made answer. "There it lies beneath Gerizim yonder, waiting for our taking only. When all is achieved, when victory is secured, then and then only may we take that which fate has granted unto us. Haste, and farewell! See; we three are pledged for Israel."

"For Israel!" was the reply. "For Israel and the triumph of Messias! For Israel and for vengeance upon Herod and on Rome!"

And thus again they parted. The Princess of Arabia rode onward to her father's palace in the Red City of Petra by the desert. Bar-Simon rejoined the Master on the Samaritan highway, while Bar-Asha, filled again with hope, fired with a new ambition and aflame with the dream of a greater glory than he had ever dared look forward to, hurried on to Jerusalem, there to await the triumph of Messias that now seemed so close at hand.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE KNIFEMAN'S RESOLVE.

THE "triumphal entry," upon which hung so many hopes for Israel, had come and gone. The Rabbi Jeshua, as men still called him, had fulfilled the prophecies. He had entered Jerusalem circled with hosannas and shrined in shouts of joy. All about him rang the cries of praise and welcome. A great multitude of adoring people thronged him around. Before him, heralding his coming—behind him, echoing the shouts of those who led, moved a joyous procession, fit to grace and strengthen the triumphant progress of a king. His pathway had been strewn with palms and flowers and the garments of his devotees. High hopes had sprung afresh in many a patriot's breast as down the slopes of Olivet, and all along the shouting way the Teacher rode upon the lowliest of beasts, while all the air rang with the glad refrain: Hosanna! Hosanna to the son of David! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!

And now the hour had passed and he was not yet king over Israel. The mighty shouting that he had not sought to still, he had not deigned to answer with the words that all men hoped to hear. He had made no move to declare his kingly mission; no voice, in his name, had

bidden the people rally to the standard of their long-expected king. The ready signal-fires still lay, cold and unlighted, upon the heights of Moab and on the crest of Gilead. The army of the 'Aretas, beyond the Arabian border, still waited the signal for the invasion of the north. The great uprising had spent itself in shoutings and given no king to Israel.

Bar-Asha had witnessed it all. He had witnessed and marvelled. He had mingled with the shouting throngs ; he had pressed close beside the mounted figure of him he hoped to hail as king. He had stood ready and anxious to act, his hand upon the pulse of the people, his eye upon the Master. And still no sign of kingship had come.

When the indignant Rabbi had cleared the over-crowded temple court of the hucksters and the money-changers who defiled it, then Bar-Asha's heart beat high. Now at last, he thought, is the appointed time. Now, in the very courts of the temple he has cleared, will he announce his kingship and take upon himself the royal name, authority, and state.

But the supreme moment went by unheeded. And when in the Court of the Gentiles within the temple walls the priests and elders, tempting him, asked this Rabbi Jeshua by what authority he performed his wonderful deeds, behold ! he answered them nothing. It was all too strange, too disheartening for Bar-Asha's solving. It was a shipwreck of hope, a breaking down of faith.

Watching, wondering, despairing, Bar-Asha still followed in the throng that pressed about this perplexing Teacher, until at last to him came Juda Bar-Simon, who, linking an arm in his, led him a little way apart from the listening throng.

"Son of Asha," he said, "here fades our last hope of action. For now full three years have I followed yonder rabbi, believing that in him alone lay the redemption of Israel. He has fulfilled the prophecies, he has unsealed the mysteries, he has proclaimed himself Messias. And yet what are the prophecies, what is Messias, if the son of David doth not come as king to Israel? He has deliberately spurned the offer of a throne, he has thrown aside every advantage, he has failed to turn the enthusiasm of the people to his profit—and to ours. He who should redeem his nation has bowed the knee to Rome. 'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's,' I heard him say to certain of those who questioned whether it were lawful to pay tribute money to Rome. He has made a scorn of those among our people who best could help him in his government—even the priests and elders of the people. He has lost forever the choicest opportunity that ever man had for power, and spurned the richest chances for success. What it meaneth I cannot fathom. To me Messias standeth for something more than a prattler of precepts, a healer of sick folk, a scoffer of the rich. For me he must be a leader, a prince, a mighty and valorous conqueror. I am sick at heart. I, who have ever counselled you to hold fast to your purpose, believing yonder rabbi to be, in very deed, the Sent of God, the Christ who is to bring back the sceptre unto Judah, the glory unto Israel, I am discouraged and cast down. Son of Asha, we must look elsewhere for our king unless——" and here a new thought seemed to take sudden possession of his mind, "unless he waits a more wondrous opportunity to show his power and his might."

Too lost in bewilderment and surprise at this outburst on the part of one who had been his mentor, his strength-

ener, his guide in all that had related to the enthroning of Messias, Bar-Asha had found neither word nor sign with which to interrupt the knifeman's torrent of accusations against the Lord. And now he only asked, "And what may that be?"

"Even the hour of seeming defeat and death," Bar-Simon replied. "Hearken. Again and again hath he spoken of his fate—saying that he must be betrayed and delivered into the hands of his enemies, mocked by the Gentiles, and doomed to the cross. In all of this, though never before, do I now see a purpose. Perchance it is that very moment that he hath chosen to show his power. So be it then. I, who have long time waited for his hour, will bring that hour about. Son of Asha, I will betray the Lord!"

"Betray him?" Bar-Asha started in surprise and looked upon the speaker in questioning and in scorn.

"Ay; since only this can bring about our hopes. Nay; move not away nor look on me in anger, for even you who have aided me before must second me in this. I will deliver him into the hands of those who now for many a month have sought a way to seize him. Only thus may I arouse him to his duty, only thus shall he achieve the end for which he was sent. Then shall he save himself by one swift, mighty act. When his enemies of the temple shall compass him about, when, bound and a prisoner, his hour of death seems near, when all the chances seem to be most grievously against him, then, and then only, will he rally the people by a word, or, more wonderful still, then and then only will he call upon the ten legions of angels that, so he hath said, he may command to do his bidding. Oh, what an hour will

that be, son of Asha! With the very hosts of heaven ranged at his side the glory of Israel will be royally ushered in. His foemen of the high places, the tyrants of Rome, the minions of the Idumean usurpers shall all be overthrown and Messias in might and in glory shall rule a king at last. And I will bring it about. I will make test of his power. This very day will I play the traitor. Through seeming treachery will I work a splendid triumph. I will seek the rulers of the temple. Even with that haughty priest, Joseph Caiaphas, whom I do so hotly hate, will I covenant to deliver the Master into his hands, and when Messias shall, with a word, scatter his enemies and wrest himself from their power, then—ah, then—how will I gloat over their discomfiture and feed fat my old revenges!"

Attractive and dramatic though this latest scheme appeared, all changeful of heart and inconsistent in action as he was, Bar-Asha still detested treachery. He looked with loathing upon Bar-Simon; the plan seemed both base and brutal. And yet he could not doubt Messias' power. He who could raise others from the grave, could he not save himself from death? Surely he shall; and then—the greater the danger, the mightier the triumph.

"It suits me not," he said at length; "and yet it is a marvellous scheme—as great as desperate. If Messias will not proclaim himself when all seems fitted for the act, what can he now await but the hour when all seems desperate and when, out of the very moment of defeat, he rises to the highest victory? A marvellous scheme—and yet, son of Simon, I cannot sanction treason; I cannot aid betrayal. Messias gave me life; I cannot, nay, I will not, even seem to bring him death!"

"Then keep you silence, friend," Bar-Simon straight replied, "and shelter your fear beneath a quiet tongue. What none else dare, that dare I. What says the creed of our brotherhood of the knife: Death is indifferent, freedom is all in all. For freedom would I even seem to play the traitor if by that act I may bring in the end we seek. For hark ye, O frail of faith! If by this means I do force Messias' triumph, if I do but place the Master in a strait from which retreat is impossible so that, at the last, he is compelled to call upon his angel allies for succor or to throw himself upon the people for rescue and be raised by them to the throne of David, how great will be my reward! For, when the triumph is achieved, who more than Juda the knifeman shall be honored in Messias' kingdom? Who beyond the son of Simon shall be foremost among you, highest in Israel? The time for action is come. Not one in all our band—not Simon, the son of Jona, who protests so loudly of his loyalty; not James, the son of Zebedee, who aspires to sit upon the right hand of the king; nay, not even Johanan, whom I hate because the Master loveth him best of all the chosen twelve,—not one of them, I say, shall at the last receive the place or the power that shall be his who saw the time and way for action and dared to put that action to the awful test. My mind is made. My course is clear. This very day will I bring about the greatest of all the Master's miracles, the grandest of all his triumphs."

He was gone. Before Bar-Asha could stay him with a word or with a restraining hand, the fanatical knifeman had slipped away and Bar-Asha was alone.

Where was his duty? Which way lay the right? Never before had the soul of this typical son of Issachar

been so torn with doubt, so filled with conflicting emotions. The Master was in danger. Should he not warn him of Bar-Simon's scheme ?

Insensibly he moved toward the crowded temple where the surging thousands of the Passover guests thronged about the Master. He listened to the parables—those marvellously told stories dear to every Oriental audience —that pointed the precepts and adorned the teachings of this wondrous man ; he heard the scathing rebuke administered to those who, high in power, aimed to live for self rather than for the public good. The magic of that matchless voice, the tenderness and spiritual nobility of that strong though womanly face, the truths that fell like pearls of great price from those inspired lips made him forget all else but the tongue that told and the voice that proclaimed those mighty truths to men. And when one standing at his elbow writhed under the intense personalism of the Master's words and broke out angrily: "So ! what folly is this ? He is a Samaritan and hath a devil ! " Bar-Asha turned on the critic fully as angrily and would have forced him to retract. And even then the eye of the great Teacher fell upon the angry Pharisee. " I have not a devil. I honor my Father and ye do dishonor me. I seek not mine own glory. There is One that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings he shall never see death."

Bar-Asha turned away thoughtfully. For he remembered that hardest of all the sayings of the Master : " Resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." How could a man keep this saying, and still labor for the freeing of

Israel? Love your enemies? Bless them that curse you? Ay; a man might well keep those sayings and never see death. But who would live a coward? Bar-Asha's eyes were blinded. The world was not yet ready for the supreme Christlikeness of the Sermon on the Mount. After nineteen centuries of striving it is scarce ready for it even to-day. With Cheliel Bar-Asha, as with us, ambition choked the word, and the seed fell in thorny ground.

Musing thus, perplexed and pondering over the precepts that seemed to him to war with patriotism and to bid one play the craven, Bar-Asha left the precincts of the temple. And still the Master walked and talked, unwarned.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TEST OF POWER.

Most restless of all living women if her plans but lagged, Amina the Princess of Arabia, in far-off Petra, chafed and worried when the day had passed that was to set the signal-fires alight and put the army of her father in rapid motion toward the north.

But only to Magalath the Magian did she disclose her fears.

"The son of Asha hath a halting mind," she said. "What if, when chance should serve him best, he fails in action, turned away by faltering faith or—may Baal-Samin blast her baby face!—by that Jew-girl of the cave of the Jauran? Though I do love him, I dare not trust my prince. I must go and see."

"Behold now, noble princess, I, too, will go with thee," the old star-priest had said. "The stars betoken glory. A king comes grandly to his own. Doubt not the lack of signal-fires, the dearth of tidings from the prince, thy friend. Man is but finite; God is all in all. When spears turn dull and lances fall to rust, when warlike valor dies in craven breasts and men grow cold when most their ardor and their faith should burn, even then, O princess, do the stars fight on and in their courses guide the fate of kings. Last night as, kneeling in my

sacred circle upon the lofty *ziggurat* your father's grace did rear for me, I watched the wheeling stars, lo! in the west, while clouds did break before them, there I saw Marduk the mediator cross the fiery plane of Nergal the avenger, while Nana and Anat, earth and heavens alike, seemed blended into one. In all this must I read some marvellous sign—a blessing to the world the like of which hath not appeared to man since those days, long ago, when the flaming star bore us to the manger of the infant King. Ormuzd hath conquered Ahriman. Zosiosh cometh to his own. Once again I follow where the stars lead on. My hour at last hath come."

And so it happened that, with the gray old magian as her companion, and followed but by her slender escort of trusted spearmen, Amina set off in haste for the gates of Jerusalem, once more to seek Bar-Asha out and learn the reason of this new delay.

The April sun shone cloudless that day upon Jerusalem. Snowy pinnacle and gleaming roof, lordly palace and massive temple threw back the glittering glory in myriad rays, and over all the town, from the gateway over against Olivet to the wall about the Lower City and the westerly Gate of the Fountain, fell the spell and glamour of the Syrian spring.

"He who has not seen Jerusalem," says the Talmud, "has never seen a beautiful city"; and wearied though he was in soul and body, with all the conflicting passions that warred within him, so, too, thought Bar-Asha, as, climbing the slope upon which rose the vast temple, lifting far up into the flashing sunlight the golden spikes that crested its lofty roof, he gazed down on the holy city stretched in splendor at his feet.

It was the fourteenth of the month Nisan, the day before the opening of the great Passover feast. Jerusalem was alive with visitors. Its streets were thronged with strangers. Jew and Gentile alike crowded into the holy city, lodging where they might—in booths and tents and in the villages without the gates. A million people came from every quarter to keep the solemn days of unleavened bread, and only that very morning, so great had been the throng in the temple courts, that one man had been trampled to death even as he brought in on his shoulders the paschal lamb that, on behalf of his family, he was to sacrifice before the altar of offerings in the Court of the Priests.

But not in temple court nor altar of burnt offerings did Bar-Asha find comfort or interest on that eventful day. True, as became a son of Israel, he had fulfilled the law in all its requirements, but now his chief thought lay in the threat of Juda Bar-Simon and the glory that, even through treachery, might fall upon all Israel as its Heaven-sent Messias, calling, in his hour of direst need, upon the angel hosts that came to do his bidding, rose grandly to a throne.

Through all the outer courts he passed, and now, standing in one of the cloisters near to the Su-san Gate, he looked upon the never-ceasing throng that came and went along the slope of Olivet. And even as he looked he saw, coming up the steep way that led into the gate, two forms that were familiar—a majestic old man, slow of step, with staff in hand, and a beautiful woman, with face scarce more than slightly veiled, whose restless eyes sought here and there for one she hoped to see. Gentiles both, he knew them at once—Magalath the Magian and the Princess Amina.

"So, son of Asha! Why wait our mighty plans?" came the nervous inquiry from the princess as her eyes flashed recognition and her steps sought Bar-Asha's side.

"For yet a mightier one, O princess," Bar-Asha replied. "This very night will come a revelation of glory and power, greater than any that our weak hands can bring." Already was he converted to faith in Bar-Simon's plan.

"What is it?" Amina asked. And Bar-Asha made answer: "Wait and see. Our king shall come mightily to his rightful throne."

"Ha! said I not rightly, princess?" the wistful magian asked. "The stars fought not in vain as I did watch them from your father's tower. The day of Zosiosh is come at last."

And Bar-Asha said: "Ay, princess; if this very day Messias doth not show his mighty power in marvellous guise, then hope is dead and prophecy is but an idle tale. Watch now and see the glory of the coming of the Lord."

The day wore on to night. In many an upper chamber was the table set; the uninviting feast partaken of with solemn formula; the cup of blessing passed; the Hallel loudly sung. But at no other of all those Passover feasts save that historic one did he who presided say to one he served or with such deep intent: "What thou doest, do quickly!"

The sop was dipped and given. Then into the breast of one man "Satan entered"—the Satan of ambition unfulfilled, of desire gone astray, of duty misconceived, of self unclarified by a mighty love. And he that had taken the sop went out quickly. "And it was night!"

Within that one upper chamber, now known of all the world, the *cos ha-berachah*, the fourth and last "cup of

blessing," passed from hand to hand. The last strains of the Hallel chant rose and fell, and out into the darkness went that little band. Out into the feasting city, out through the temple court, out through the Su-san Gate, and down into the valley they passed. Their faces were set toward a favorite resting-place—Gethsemane, the garden of the oil-press ; and so, going together, they crossed the narrow bridge beneath which ran the brook of Kedron, red that day with the blood of three hundred thousand slaughtered paschal lambs.

A generation before, upon the further bank of a stream scarce larger than the rushing Kedron, was a decisive step taken. Across the Rubicon there lay for the greatest of all the Cæsars victory or death. Beyond the Kedron lay for a greater than all the Cæsars defeat, humiliation, agony, and death. The Rubicon was crossed and Cæsar gained an empire. The Kedron was crossed and Christ has won a world. The one was selfishness ; the other sacrifice. He who might have shirked his duty and reigned a king on earth ; he who had said : "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it up again," deliberately decided for victory through the basest death. The Kedron was crossed and the Great Sacrifice was accepted. Not all the blood of all the paschal lambs that tinged the flowing Kedron on that Passover day was as a drop in the ocean of sacrifice compared with the one Divine Paschal who walked that fateful bridge—the Lamb of God who by that act of heroism taketh away, even now, the sins of the world.

Along the narrow gorge that makes the Jehoshaphat Valley and skirts the side of Kedron winding toward the

north there passed, some hours later, a motley throng—soldiers of Rome, servants of the Temple, and leaders of the priestly order, high in the councils of Caiaphas and of Annas. With flaming torches silently they passed, and, leading them on, there hastened at their head a nervous, hurrying form, a man upon whose face purpose overcame all other motives—loyalty, pity, love, and trust.

Bar-Asha had joined this following as it crossed the broad plaza of the Xistus within the city and mounted the Temple hill. He knew the leader—the son of Simon, Juda the knifeman. The threat of the Gaulonite had been carried out. He had betrayed Messias.

And now was to come the moment on which the hopes of both Bar-Simon and Bar-Asha hung—a moment big with the fate of Israel and the world.

"Whomsoever I shall kiss," Bar-Asha heard the traitor say to the captain of the posse, "that same is he. Hold him fast, but lead him away safely." And Bar-Asha felt that Juda must have added quite beneath his breath—"if you can."

Along the gorge and up the narrow way they passed. Above them towered the walls of the silent city and of the mighty Temple outlined against the midnight sky. They stopped at last before the open gate of one of the many gardens that lined the Olivet slope, without the city walls—Gethsemane, the place of the oil-press.

Straight through the gate Bar-Simon led his men. Within the garden, where through the broken framework of the olive-trees the moonlight showed a little rise of round, stood a solitary figure, waiting yet motionless, as if in silent prayer.

The clatter of the advancing throng aroused the others of the chosen band. Terrified at the intrusion, they gathered about their leader, seeking rather than promising protection. And Juda the knifeman, the restless fanatic who sought to force the fate he could not calmly wait, straightened himself as by a final struggle with his conscience over this act of treachery, and hurried up to that waiting figure. "Hail, Master!" he said, and kissed him.

"Juda," the calm, unruffled voice made answer; "betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Then to the armed rabble grouped behind the traitor, with their flaming torches and their spears and clubs, he said: "Whom seek ye?"

And the leader of the temple guard, in all the assumed bravado of a shallow contempt, answered: "Jeshua the Netser."

"I am he."

The simplicity of truth is sometimes startling in the effect of its directness. This reply, so prompt, so unexpected, and yet so majestic in its utterance, quite intimidated these doers of a craven deed, already overawed by the spell of the place, the time, and the mysterious man they came to capture. The power that flashed from out those wondrous eyes, the magnetism of the look and voice, completely unmanned them. With a backward step of surprise and fear, crowding upon one another in their confusion and their haste, they fell to the ground.

Now was the appointed time. Bar-Asha strained his ears to catch the whirring of those heavenly wings that were to bring the angel wardens to the defence of him who had announced his power over them. But no heavenly helpers came.

Once again was the query put: "Whom seek ye?"

And once more, though with less of bravado and contempt in its words, the answer came from the leader of that demoralized throng, as, now reassured, he stood upon his feet again: "The Rabbi Jeshua—him of Nazareth."

"I have told you that I am he," the Master said. "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me?"

"Malluch," the leader said; "bind him and bring him away."

If the angelic allies were not now to appear, surely here was it the people's part to gather about him who proclaimed himself Messias. Bar-Asha, full of ardor for what now seemed almost a losing cause, sprang between the advancing Malluch and the holy one he sought to pinion.

"Master," Bar-Asha cried; "Lord, here am I whom thou didst call to life at Nain. Bid me serve thee. Shall we smite with the sword? Stand off!"—this to the advancing Malluch; and, with a quickness that told of devotion and desire, Bar-Asha whipped out his short sword from its sheath, and, striking at Malluch with savage intent, missed his head, but gashed his ear with a vicious slash.

Now, if ever, should come Messias' battle-cry, arousing the slumbering city, calling the faithful to his side: Up, O Israel! Out swords and slay! Strike for your freedom and your king!

Alas! it came not; but instead Bar-Asha heard the words of warning and reproof: "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall

perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to the Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels. But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled? The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

And even as with these words he gave himself into the power of his enemies, he stretched out a hand toward the wounded Malluch.

"Suffer ye thus far," he said, and, touching the bleeding ear, healed it with that touch.

Then the guards closed about him and he was gone. But Bar-Asha sank to the earth defeated, indignant, chagrined.

Was it then all to be for nothing that he had labored, hoping against hope, striving against discouragement? Was there to be no king come to Israel, no Messias, no deliverer? Had this but been another of that long line of false Christs who, again and again, had roused up the people's expectations only to dash them ruthlessly to earth? What, then, meant all these wondrous works of healing and of help that this Rabbi Jeshua had done? Were they but tricks wrought by a cunning eye and a well-skilled hand, or was it true, as some, indeed, had said, that this Rabbi Jeshua did but cast out devils through Baal-Zebub, prince of all the devils?

It is but a sudden drop from trust to lowest hate where one is of wayward and unstable mind. And here it came with direst intensity. Bar-Asha experienced a revulsion of feeling that flamed into a bitter anger, and grew into a deep disgust. He had thrown away his life for a dream; he had sacrificed his future for a fable; he had been deceived; he

had been juggled with ; he had been undone. This false Messias, who had led so many others like to him astray, merited the severest punishment, the most inexorable justice.

With a cry of rage the baffled Bar-Asha leaped to his feet. What ! were fame and fortune, power, peace, and glory, all to be snatched from him like this ? And by one who deliberately flung away the most glorious opportunities that man ever had for success ? Was he, Bar-Asha, not to be a prince in Israel, a great one in the land, as he had builded all his hopes and wishes ? Curses on the false teacher, the make-believe Messias ! Let him die the death ! Bar-Asha would hurry after the departing crowd and join his voice in the clamor of indignation that must demand this impostor's certain and speedy destruction.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NEMESIS.

The weary night rolled wearily away. From priest to priest, from council on to council was the silent captive passed, and still the word he might have said was unspoken, the hand that might have summoned angels or aroused a nation was never lifted in his own behalf.

Out into the welcome blackness of that April night went Juda Bar-Simon—stunned and despairing. His plans had miscarried ; his plot had come to naught ; his last great move was but a miserable failure. And as he saw the glorious Teacher, whose footsteps he had followed, whose wandering life he had shared, whose words of wisdom and of wondrous truth he had lived upon from day to day, give back neither speech for scorning nor reproof for rage, then did the foolishness of the scheme that he had laid, the magnitude of the crime he had committed, dawn cruelly upon him.

Not for greed alone, as has often been laid against his charge, had this foul deed been done. His crime was born neither of the miser's cupidity, nor of the caviller's petty spite. From all these months of contact with a perfect nature he had gained naught but increase of ambition and desire for temporal power. As dull of faith as hard of heart he could not read between the

open lines of his great Master's immortal precepts. Even to-day there are men whom a sight of the Infinite Himself could scarcely rouse from sordid schemes and purely selfish aims. Bar-Simon had hazarded his all upon a vulgar faith in the supernatural, and had lost the cast. That vaulting ambition that sometimes overleaps the saddle into which it seeks to spring had, in his case, misjudged the leap, and never comprehended the seat it strove for.

"Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" the furious high-priest had asked the prisoner; and in words that neither priest nor perjurer could ever forget, had come the answer: "I am! And ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven!"

"Blasphemy!" in simulated horror cried the false Caiaphas, rending his linen robes. "*Ish maveth!*—he is a man of death!" echoed the blinded council.

But Juda Bar-Simon had a higher vision. "He is indeed the Christ!" he said; "a greater than I did fathom, a mightier than I had dreamed. Alas! what have I done?" And, smitten with a great remorse, he had rushed out into that utter darkness that precedes the day.

Ay, what had he done indeed? Now at last all his misconceptions of Messias' mission stood clear before his eyes. He had looked for a prince; he had betrayed a prophet! He who sought to purchase place and power had lost his own base self instead! He who had striven to bring in a worldly conqueror had sold the Son of God! What deeper degradation could he know?

Dry-lipped and haggard he rushed from the great house of Caiaphas, and in the blinding darkness stum-

bled over the crouching form of one who waited without. He would have swerved aside, but the light, streaming from the open palace, had revealed his features. With an oath the watcher sprang to his feet and caught the wretched Juda by the throat.

"Liar and dog!" came the wrathful greeting. "This is your work! Your king is but a craven; your power is but a boast; your promise of freedom for Israel is but a coward's lie. He shall die; and so, by the Lord of Hosts, shall you! But for you I might have been happy and honored. For you I flung aside my brightest chances; for you I killed the only man who might have worked my good; for you I, who might have known power and privilege, wealth and station, have become a murderer and an outcast. Juda Bar-Simon, I hate you to the death. Now will I take my revenge!"

By this time Bar-Simon had recovered his breath and strength. "Madman and fool!" he hissed. "Camel-driving slave; seller of leeks and pottage! Add not your petty miseries to my greater curse. Unhand me; let me pass. I am a dangerous man."

"And so am I," Bar-Asha replied. "And who hath made me so? Come; it is your life or mine!"

With the strength and ferocity of baffled brutes the two men grappled, and in the gloom fast growing into gray the desperate struggle went on. With arms so tightly locked in an iron wrestle that the Gaulonite might not get hand to his murderous knife nor the adventurer to his deadly sword, they pushed and swayed, they strained and tugged, fighting as only those so wrought to crime can fight, until, at last, with a strength born of desperation, the knifeman threw himself bodily

upon his antagonist, tore himself free, and, with a mighty push, flung his opponent heavily to the ground. Then, turning, he rushed still farther into the uncertain gloom.

But fate would not free him yet. Worn and unnerved by this struggle with his maddened dupe, Bar-Simon sank down at last upon one of the stone benches that lined the Xistus, the forum of old Jerusalem. He would have prayed for solitude that he might think his sorrows out. But this was not to be.

A hand fell upon his shoulder. A deep voice, whose peculiar accent showed the stranger from the farther East, broke in upon his reveries.

"Friend, where is Messias?"

With a guilty start akin to that of Cain, the traitor groaned aloud: "Nay; am I his keeper? Find him out yourself."

"But he is here, O friend; here in your city of Jerusalem. And lo! he cometh to his own. I would seek him out. I, who did homage to the babe in Bethlehem, now long years ago, would see and hail him as the Anointed King yet once before I die. Speak; thou art a Jew, and he is King of the Jews. Where may I find thy Master and thy king?"

Bar-Simon looked up, trembling and in wonder, and scanned the speaker's face. The growing gray of dawn just lighted it to indistinctness and threw the outline of the stranger's form into imposing uncertainty. Juda sat speechless. That noble presence; that sweeping beard of gray!—had one of the old prophets come again to life to succor or to save the captive Son of God?

"Alas! he is no king of earthly rank," he replied. "His enemies have compassed him about. See," and

his trembling hand pointed toward the palace of the priests, "even yonder doth Messias stand—a prisoner in the hands of the elders of the Jews."

"A prisoner! Nay, that may not be," the old man sternly said. "The stars have foreshadowed no such bitter fate. They tell me that he is king of men—a God-like ruler coming to his own. Dost thou know Messias?"

"Do I know him? Rabbi, look upon me; I am of him! For now three wondrous years have I been Messias' helper. I have trod his path. I have shared his life. I have drunk of his cup and known alike his sorrows and his strength. I deemed him king indeed—Messias, Deliverer, Redeemer—and now the dream of hope for Israel is past. He is captive to those whom he had come to save."

"But who has done this thing?" the stranger asked in scorn. "Who has sold to shame the ruler of the stars? Who has dared to lay unholy hands upon the Anointed?"

And Bar-Simon, with drooping head and words that came through tears, said brokenly: "Lo! it was I! I, who have been his follower; I, who lived his friend!"

"Thou!" The intensity of contempt burned in that single word. "Thou—a Jew! Then is the world gone mad when one who cometh but to save is sold by those who are not worth the saving. Look on me!" and the gathering daylight made the face of the gray old magian seem as something more than mortal. "For long, long years have I lived but for this: to hail as king of men him whose coming the stars have long foretold. And thou wouldst bid me think that he who is the flowering of all the mighty prophecies of seers of old, whose coming is to bring God to the earth and heaven unto

men, whose kingdom is the world, whose reign shall be eternal—thou wouldst bid me believe that such as he can be shamefully abused by worms like unto those yonder whom you call your men of power, and by such a thing as thou? Ay, groan aloud and rend thy worthless rags! Curse the day thy mother gave thee birth, and hate the hour that made thy blind ambition turn thy heart from faith! What; shall such a one as thou and yon base slaves who know no god but self, strike to the death the highest of his race? Nay, never! Man is but finite; God is all in all. Messias shall be king. He whom thou thought to ruin shall forever rule, and by his great forgiveness shall he stamp thee with the brand of shame to all eternity. Verily, friend"—and the old magian's majestic censure dropped to tenderest pity—"it were indeed better for thee that thou hadst never been born."

And without another word Magalath the Magian left the stricken traitor prone on the ground within the deserted Xistus.

Not long he lay there. Springing to his feet once again he sought in feverish haste the house of Caiaphas. Not to the feet of his suffering Lord and Master did he go to share a martyr's fate and sue for the forgiveness of him whom he had wronged, but to those who knew no pity, who harbored only hate.

In the early morning still the council sat—those enemies of Messias, who would know no sleep, who would take no rest until he whom they had sworn to kill was brought to bitterest shame.

The paltry silver rang upon the floor. "Take back your money. Give me back my Lord," the suffering traitor cried. "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

As pitiless as contemptuous came the answer back: "What is that to us? See thou to that."

The thirty pieces—price of blood and blessing, sum of shame and of salvation—lay upon the floor. But Juda stooped not to gather them up; he stayed not to face the scorn of his contemners, nor seek the boundless grace of him whom he had sold.

Out into the day he rushed. The light was breaking over Olivet; down upon the Holy City fell the life-giving rays, prophetic of that more glorious Sun of Righteousness whose earthly setting, dark with dreariest clouds, should but be followed by the rising dawn that was to bless and regenerate a world.

But not of sun or life did Juda Bar-Simon think.

"My punishment is greater than I can bear," he groaned in agony of soul. "Life is but torture; death—ah, what is death?—forgetfulness? forgiveness? what?"

That same April morning certain shepherds upon the Bethlehem highway, seeking their straying sheep that had wandered from the road, turned, in their search, toward the rocky knoll that lay beyond the Hinnom Valley and overlooked the sunlit town.

And then they started in horror. For there, from the slowly swaying limb of a wind-swept, desolate tree—known even to this day as "the tree of Judas"—dangled a broken rope, and beneath it they saw upon the ground the body of a suicide.

It was Juda of Kerioth, the son of Simon. His ruined life was ended. Nemesis had run him down, and he had sought refuge in oblivion. He had solved the mystery. He, who would flee from fate and from himself, had found in the vast Unknown—what?

Was Peter's crime, who could deny with oaths and then repent with tears, so much more worthy absolution than was his who, betraying with a kiss, repented in a bitter and humiliating death? Yet one is made the warder of the church; the other stands the hated synonym of the blackest guilt.

And yet the Great Master whom they both so wronged, encircling with his divine tenderness all his enemies, had cried in his hour of direst distress, voicing the grandest height of a perfect compassion and the purest pardon: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

Is God—the Love Eternal—less merciful than was he who, suffering the deepest, could so royally excuse? Is God—the Highest Justice—as inexorable as is unthinking man, who can never palliate an error nor forgive a great mistake?

CHAPTER XXXII.

"BEHOLD YOUR KING!"

STUNG with the sense of defeat Bar-Asha lifted himself from the ground, and would have followed after his enemy. Too late. The darkness had swallowed that retreating figure. He was to be balked even of his revenge. Was it ever to be thus? In no act of his life was success to be attained?

At least he would see the condemnation of this false Messias upon whose failure his fortune had gone to wreck. He would not be cheated of that.

Once more he crouched close to the wall of the palace of the priests, and waited for the day.

It came at last, and with it the rabble of the town. Rumor is sure of foot, and already the tidings of the arrest in the garden of the oil-press had gone the rounds. The tongue of gossip is the most untiring of all reporters.

From every quarter swarmed the crowd—low fellows of the town, Passover pilgrims, strangers and guests, hesitating friends of the captive and open scoffers, those who had hated him and those whom he had helped, idlers and tramps, boys and beggars, men of every condition and of every degree, factionists, followers, curiosity-seekers, and those who love a riot or a crowd—these all and of women "not a few."

At last the palace gates swung open once again. A living lane was beaten asunder to the left and right, and out into that pushing, struggling, hooting, turbulent crowd the long procession passed. And then Bar-Asha once more saw the Lord.

O marvellous mockery of a would-be shame! O victory of the vanquished, clear to none but him! It was a king royally attended. There walked the priest and the Levite, the Pharisee and the proud Sanhedrist—leaders among the Jews; there walked the members of the great council, the officers of the temple, and, in the van, imposing in official robes, the great High-Priest himself. It was the pomp, the power, and the historic rank that still hedged close about the crumbling glory of the chosen race—and with them all, the people. And encompassed thus, bound and yet free, a captive and yet a hero, there walked the Man, escorted grandly to his eternal throne—the carpenter's son, the son of David, the Son of God—their king and the world's king, though they knew him not.

Along the way captors and captive go, surrounded by the gathering, shouting crowd, across the high Tyropæon bridge, and on to the gorgeous palace of the elder Herod, rivalling in its splendor even the glorious temple itself. Still on they go—the most famous, the most fearful of all the world's triumphal throngs, for on that day a king marched on to glory, a nation to its doom.

And in the press as maddened, as full of hot revilings, as eager for revenge as the lowest of them all, went Bar-Asha of Nain. Forgotten were the noble truths that he had heard, the lessons he had learned, the blessings he had felt. Forgotten were the wondrous deeds of helping and of mercy that he himself had witnessed; forgotten

even that mightiest of all the acts in which he had been partaker—his own recall to life by the touch and word of the Master whom he now reviled. So brutal self oft blinds the eye to truth and steels the heart to benefits conferred. So remembrance oft surrenders to revenge, and thwarted ambition forgets all but its own unwise desires. As changeful as the father of his clan—that shifting time-server who had sold his brother in Shechem and taken his gifts in Egypt—this typical son of Issachar, steadfast never, selfish ever, followed after his king, cursing where he should have cheered, persecuting where he should have sued for pardon.

Through three long hours the shifting scenes of the Great Tragedy ran their brutal course. From Roman procurator to Idumean tetrarch, from palace to palace, from Jewish judgment-hall to Roman prætorium, from inquiry to inquisition, from trifling to torture was the royal captive passed—the shuttlecock of official wavers ings and of the people's hate.

And still, with each new move the crowd grew yet more clamorous, maddened lest defeat be after all the end, and they be cheated of their desire and their sport.

"I find no fault in him at all," the procurator announced, and Bar-Asha gave a yell of baffled rage, fearful that even this last pleasure that was left to him was to be denied.

Then some one raised the cry: "Our boon; our boon! Demand the Paschal boon!" And Bar-Asha, remembering that the Gaulonite "robber" who had lost his liberty in assisting his flight from the circus at Cæsarea still lay in the dungeons of the Antonia citadel, bade those about him demand that chief's release. "Demand

the son of Abbas," he said. "Our boon; our boon!" again the cry went up.

And Pilate said: "Behold! your boon is here. I find no fault in this young man at all. Shall I release him to you at the feast?"

Then fierce and passionate rose the swelling shout: "Not this man, but Bar-Abbas! Bar-Abbas! Give us up Bar-Abbas!"

"And what then shall I do with him who is called Messias?" Pilate asked them all.

And fiercer, wilder, more tumultuous than ever came from all that seething throng the passionate reply: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

And lo! so deep in malice can sink man's nobler nature, loudest, angriest of all those murderers who voiced that terrible demand was his whose life had come from Heaven's restoring touch—Cheliel Bar-Asha, the widow's son of Nain.

Sent yet once more to the scoffing tetrarch and then back again from Herod's judgment-hall to the custody of the wavering Pilate, decked in the very height of mockery, with the white and purple robe of royalty, silent under tormenting, regal in his untouched dignity, the Divine Captive's diviner heroism aroused even the callous heart of the Roman to wonder and to reverence. Once more he led him out to face that frenzied throng, and there, standing where even now the arch that spans that historic way recalls the saddening and dramatic scene, he stood beside the Perfect Man and pointing to him cried aloud to those who surged and clamored down below:

"Behold your king!"

Bar-Asha's voice swelled the loud shout of indignant denial that greeted this announcement and changed to the murderous yell, again and again repeated, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And then it was that he heard his own name called shrilly out, and, looking back, saw, pressed hard against the nearest wall by the crowd that surged and crushed between, Amina the Princess and Magalath the Magian.

Bar-Asha fought his way toward them. Upon the woman's face scorn, disgust, disappointment, and anger turned her Oriental beauty to the passion of a fury. But the eyes of the old star-priest were fixed and reverent, seeing no one in all that shouting mass, uplifted to the one passionless figure upon the arch of the Gabbatha.

"So; yonder stands your king, O princely son of Asha!" the scornful princess cried. "Fool, dupe, and knave! And triple fool I, thus blindly to have believed your shallow words! Is this the end of all? Is this the passage to your princely power? Is yonder battered Thing, whom even the meanest creatures in your Jewish streets now spit upon and drive to death—is he Messias, the Redeemer of Israel, the Lord of all the world? And he would conquer Herod; he was to humble Rome; he would bring the ancient glory back to this troubled land and give again the power to your princely house! Your house, forsooth! Your hovel and your den! Out, lying slave; thus do you end my dream of dreams. I spurn you from my heart and life. From this day forth you are to me as if you never were. Back to your camels and your leeks, your filthy hill-town and your clownish ways. Amina loathes you. Amina casts you off forever. O prince of fools and lord of lies, farewell! Thus do I

give you back your own!" and stooping to the ground she gathered up a handful of the reeking mud that overspread the thickly trodden way, and with a bitter laugh and a strength born of vindictiveness and disgust she flung the muck full into the son of Asha's face.

Then, melting into the crowd, she disappeared from Bar-Asha's life—forever.

But still the old magian stood upright, majestic and unmoved; still upon his face dwelt the rapt expression; still from his fixed and opened eyes shone reverence, homage, faith.

Out from the crowd came the last yell of frenzy and fanaticism: "His blood be on us and on our children!" And the two central figures upon the Gabbatha—craven Roman and unconquered king—withdrew into the palace.

"Now blessed be the promise of the stars that gave to me the truth," the waking magian said. "He is the king. Cradled in a manger, rejected of his people, done to death by those he came to save—yet is he king at last. Mourn, O Jerusalem, city of shame; weep, O Israel, land of desolation. This day have you sealed your dreadful doom; this hour have you cursed yourself to all eternity. And he? He shall live forever. He hath overcome the world. Ormuzd hath conquered Ahriman. Zosiosh is Lord forevermore. Now may I depart in peace; my mission is fulfilled."

He turned as if to go, and Bar-Asha, blinded though he was by rage and shame, by broken hopes and by a woman's curse, still had manliness enough to wish to guide the aged magian's steps. But with a furious rush, as, swayed by a new desire they turned to seek out the path that must lead to the spot of execution, the dense

crowd pushed and surged in desperate exit from the narrow way, behold! the old star-priest was caught up in the crush, caught, flung to earth and overthrown, trampled upon by all the myriad feet of that struggling, selfish throng.

Thus they passed over him, and he was left alone. But, even as he lay there, dead in his hour of content, the morning sun looked down upon him from above the towers of the Herodian palace, and cast fantastic shadows on the deserted place.

And as, fighting his way out from that living death-press, Bar-Asha sought the body of his friend and knelt beside it, he started with a surprise that aroused all the deeply buried yearnings of his storm-tossed soul.

For there, across the battered form of the dead magian, the morning sunlight played, and as it touched him with its shaft of flame, lo! upon his face, calm and majestic even in death, fell the shadow of a cross. Magalath the Magian had found the way of life. The stars had given him hope; the cross had brought him peace and rest at last.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AND AFTER—WHAT?

THE Divine Tragedy was accomplished. The Lamb was slain indeed. Marvels greater than any that man had ever known stamped the memory of that day of sacrifice deep in the breasts of friend and foe.

At noonday over all the great city had fallen the shroud of sudden darkness; the ground had trembled with an earthquake shock, and, even then, so timid and superstitious folk did say,

"The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead"

did walk the city's streets within that noon-day gloom. The great and gorgeous veil which, in the temple, hung between the Hecal porch and the awful Holy of Holies, beyond which no man dared to look, was rent in twain from top to bottom. Thus was the old order changed. The priesthood of a saviour of the world was to rend and fling aside the outworn priesthood of a narrow and exclusive Law.

And as the shadows fell on Cavalry, and men, beating their breasts in terror and remorse, streamed back to the city along the road which, that very morning, they had trod with curses on their lips, lo! upon the tree of the cross the divine sufferer murmured: "It is finished!"

and with these words of consummation yielded up his spirit.

Weighed down by a physical agony more fearful in its intensity than any that mortal man can feel ; distressed by a woe unutterable as he saw the deadly rancor of those he lived to bless ; filled with a foreboding of all those centuries of blood and suffering that must elapse before man, whom he came to save from earthliness, would allow himself to be redeemed, the great cry burst asunder the cords that held his mortal life, and with a broken heart the Man Immortal died.

But the Immortal can never die ; and in that very act of death did the mortal put on Immortality. From that cross on Calvary has streamed a light that has illumined all the world. Not one of all the sons of all the centuries that lie between but has felt the inspiration and the influence of that wonderful death-scene. Scoffer or saint, doubter or disciple—not one but has been touched and strengthened by the real story of the Cross. Priestly inventions and infidel "realisms" have never been able to weaken its grandeur nor minimize its potency. It was the simplest yet the grandest of all the world's historic happenings—the giving that was gaining.

The heart that broke in grief and pain over a misunderstood life and an unaccepted sacrifice took to itself, anew, for the sins and sinners of the world, a tenderness that was eternal, a pity that was divine, a never-resting effort that was in time to draw all men close to that Bleeding Heart that bled and broke for man. The death-shriek of the forsaken teacher lost itself in the triumph-cry of the glorified saviour, and he who could say of his great life-labor : It is finished ! could also say

with the tone and bearing of a conqueror: I have overcome the world!

Deathlessness through death, gain through loss, victory through defeat—the message of that earthquake-riven Calvary has proven itself the greatest of all the slowly-learned lessons of the ages—the regenerator of man, the uplifter of the world:

"Speak, History! Who are life's victors? Unroll thy long annals and say—
Are they those whom the world called the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs or Nero? The Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst,
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?"

But even before the end, a great fear fell upon the son of Asha. Fascinated by that spell of horror that emphasizes man's natural curiosity and draws us on to look at that we fain would shun, Bar-Asha lingered long about the skull-shaped mound on which was reared the cross of him he had reviled. And ever and again he would look, not on the face of the martyr, but at the rudely-scrawled inscription that topped the central cross: *This is Jeshua the Netser—the King of the Jews.*

Again his wavering soul was racked with torturing doubts. What if, after all, that contemptuous inscription, compounded of Roman scoffing and of Roman spite, were true and he had raised his voice and hand to kill the rightful king? Would not some terrible punishment, some dire calamity come to him for this?

Stretched upon the ground, in company with thousands who waited for the end and still yelled out revilings to

the suffering one, Bar-Asha lay thus watching and thinking as the hours went by, the fury of the morning surely yielding to a fast-advancing doubt. And then upon them all the murky darkness fell, and men cried out in wonder asking what it meant.

What man cannot understand, that he shrouds in superstition? And when that mystery comes to cap an overwrought fanaticism or an evil deed, at once all the craven in the man strikes for the surface and, groping in doubt, he gives the rein to fear.

Then the earth trembled and Bar-Asha's guilty soul, shaken in terror by this double sign, saw in them both the dreadful warnings of an outraged Lord.

"I have slain the Anointed; I have crucified my king!" he shrieked, and fell upon his face, digging his clutching fingers into the yielding earth. Oh, might he not yet be able to do one act of service to his dying Lord?

Just then, from him upon the cross there came the only word of physical suffering that day of torture knew: "I thirst!"

Quick to action, as ever was his wont, Bar-Asha sprang upon his feet and seizing from the nearest jar of *posca*, set close at hand for the comfort of the Roman guard, the sponge that served alike for cover and for cork, he saturated it with the acid drink and held it up toward the sufferer. But when he found himself unable to reach the parching lips, he broke off a tough stick of the *ezob* or caper-plant that grew among the rocks near by, and thrusting this through the moistened sponge lifted it until the grateful refreshment touched the lips of the Crucified One.

And as he did so, lo ! as if a curtain had been drawn aside before his eyes, the darkness fell away, and, looking up, he saw by the streaming light, upon the face of him he thus had succored, a look of utter thankfulness, a smile as of divine forgiveness.

Flinging the sponge to earth, Bar-Asha cried aloud in bitterest remorse, and with the memory of that pardoning look eternally stamped upon his heart, he rushed as if pursued, far from that fatal spot, pierced through and through with all the poignancy of completest grief.

What now remained to him of life or of desire ? Conscience was as a heated branding-iron ; hope was gone ; ambition dead ; the dream of princely power finally dispelled. Love was as lees and emptiness ; for since Amina's scorn had lost her from his life, her last mad act had turned his love to loathing. Israel held nothing for him of promise or desire. His humble home among the hills of Nain was but a distasteful thought, for what, after his adventurous career, could life be among those plodding village folk but flat and stale, as salt without its savor ?

He would turn hermit and join the monastery of the Essenes beside the Sea of Salt. He would turn soldier, and in the ranks of Rome, far to the north or west, would, amid new surroundings, forget the follies and the troubles of his wayward life. He would go to Alexandria, to Cyprus, or to distant Rome, and joining his brethren would become a merchant and strive for wealth and treasure.

But what had the Master said : " How hardly shall they that put their trust in riches enter into the kingdom." The Master ! Ah, what wells of sorrow did that name

unclose? Riches — treasure! Why, dolt that he was, where had his memory fled? Had he not yet one chance for doing left, one fortune waiting only for his taking? How had he forgotten it?—the treasure of Gerizim—the legacy of Amina's love and hate!

Surely the excitement of the week just past had crowded from his mind the thought of that still buried treasure to which he alone possessed the key. But stay; did he alone possess it? Would not Amina, burning for revenge, anticipate him there and seize it all before he moved to take it?

The thought filled him with terror. Not a moment was to be wasted. He would hasten to the cave at once, and in a new place secrete as much of the spoil as he could bear away.

Here then was action that would occupy his mind. His choice was made. He would, with all the powers and possibilities of this waiting wealth become, elsewhere a Greek, a Gentile—any thing but remain one of the treacherous race, who, though his brothers, had put to death their teacher and their king.

The morning sun was well above the eastern hills when, the next day Bar-Asha paused beside the Well of Jacob. How full of associations was this resting-place. Here had he heard the Master's own declaration of Messiahship, proclaimed to a despised and questionable woman of Samaria; here, too, had he, all aflame with loyalty, failed utterly when the test of faith confronted him. The Well of Jacob held but sorry memories for him.

The associations that, clustering about some spot connected with our past, do but intensify memories and emphasize opportunities, are always sad; if pleasant, one

mourns at the loss of the things that were and are not—if unpleasant, who can glance at a spot thus linked forever to one's life with any thing but self-censure or regret? And so, bowed with the weight of present loss and of past insufficiencies, Bar-Asha took his way toward the sacred hill of the Samaritans, the ruin-strewed crest of Gerizim.

Even with the certainty of success and wealth attending his steps, Bar-Asha's frame of mind was far different from that excited, buoyant, expectant spirit that had urged him to the task on that first search for the buried treasure. He who is heavy of heart is correspondingly light of ambition and of effort.

Slowly he toiled up the side of Gerizim. Avoiding the paths and ways of men, he sought an ascent of the sacred hill quite beyond the walls and gates of Neapolis —that new city on the site of the old. Skirting the hill, he clambered up the rocky northern slope and halted not until he saw before him the ruins of the old temple of Sanballat the Horonite.

Strange, he thought to himself, that the old ruin should look so differently when approached from another quarter. This was surely the place, and yet it seemed not the place. He retraced his steps until he came once again to the path upon the eastern slope which he had climbed before. Then, pushing straight up to the crest once more, he clambered on until he stood within the confines of the ruined temple and looked for the standing-stone that was an index to the entrance to the cave. It was no longer there!

Startled, perplexed, horrified by this unlooked-for discovery, Bar-Asha laid his hands upon the historic wall

and counted slowly and quite aloud the "twelve stones in the fourth course of the palace of King Melchizedek."

There was no doubt as to their identity. Unhewn, and all of bluish-gray, there they stood, even as he had found them first, even as there they stand to-day, set back fully eight inches from the line of their three underlying courses. Where, then, was the high black boulder seared with the marks of storm and time, that very patriarch of the rocks that had stood guard above the buried treasure even from the days of Moses the Law-giver—the stone which, at two hours past the mid-day, should throw across the entrance to the hidden cave the shadow of a running man? It was not there!

All about the place lay ruin and desolation. Rocks innumerable strewed the slope and, as the anxious Bar-Asha crawled among them searching for the marks that he had made for future identification, suddenly he started to his feet in amazement. The rocks showed signs of having but recently been smashed and shattered and loosely strewn about.

"An enemy hath done this to mislead and disconcert me," he cried. "Amina! This is her revenge!"

And yet this could not be. No hands of man or men much less of any woman could have wrought this ruin. Over all the hill-slope were strewn the newly shattered stones. There were fresh and yawning fissures in the very hill-top itself.

Then it was that the truth burst full upon him. The earthquake shock that had intensified that tragic sacrifice on Calvary had smitten the hill of Gerizim. And, casting down to earth the sentinel rock, it had seamed and rent asunder the sacred mount, destroying and

utterly obliterating all signs and marks that could guide the treasure-hunter to the wealth he had so openly refused to dedicate to the service of the Lord. He had been punished, indeed. The treasure had been snatched away from him.

Long hours he sought and searched. But all to no avail. Again and again did he measure off from the twelve stones of King Melchizedek's ancient "palace" the forty cubits less one. But with each new measuring the farther was he from discovery. The square flat stone that covered the way into the cave could not be found. Ruins strewed the slope, and ruin deeper and yet more complete overspread his hopes. The treasure of Gerizim, that was his only for the taking, was now as deeply buried and as surely lost as it had been through all the ages in which it had lain unknown and undiscovered of man. And to this day no man hath been able to find or to fathom the secret hiding-place of that buried treasure of Moses the Law-giver, which, so tradition says, still lies concealed beneath the ruin-strewn slopes of Gerizim.

The slow descending sun sank into the waters of the Great Sea beyond the western hills. Night fell upon Samaria and upon Bar-Asha's hopes. He turned away at last. Utterly disappointed—defeated, baffled, overcome with shame and loss—the son of Asha felt his uncertain way down the sacred mountain, a broken victim, so he felt, of the vengeance of that high heaven whose messenger he had so slighted, discredited, and reviled.

"I am accursed!" he groaned aloud; "a worse than Cain—a murderer, an outcast, an apostate, branded with the scorn of man and the vengeance of the Lord."

What, then, should he do? Where, then, should he go, but to those who, like himself, were outcast and incorrigible?

And so it came to pass that before the next succeeding April day had drawn to a close Bar-Asha had left the scenes of his perfidy and his defeat far behind him, and, journeying to the eastward, was seeking out the haunts of those among whom he felt his portion and his lot must be forever cast—the outlaws of the hills of Gilead, the band of Bar-Abbas—that released robber, whose life had been bartered for the betrayed and crucified Messias.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PITY OF WOMAN.

And there he came to himself. Why or how he did so is not for us to know. Who shall say along what lines of thorny introspection and of jagged consciousness, sharper and more flinty than any over which have ever walked with bare and bleeding feet the penitents of old, the repentant prodigal goes back to duty and endeavor?

The outlaws of Bar-Abbas' band would have made him one of them, and from the fastnesses of Gilead would have sent him forth to spoil and harry the rich merchants of the Gentile towns, the hated hirelings of Rome. But neither the excitement of the foray nor the promise of booty had attractions for Bar-Asha now. Off to the west, beyond the hill of Moreh, within the gate of Nain, the widowed mother for whose sake and at whose entreaty he had been recalled to life, now sat in sorrow, mourning for her only son. At her side lay his duty; there were his work and sphere. He had deserted her in her hour of need; he had turned from her and well-nigh forgotten her in his hour of highest hope, when the glory of ambition and the dream of prosperity held him heart and soul, and when upon him seemed to fall the promise of a mighty fortune and a royal career. Could she, would she take back the ruined, wrecked, and

empty life that now alone he brought her? Would she, forgiving all, be to him again the loving mother as of old?

Scarcely seven days did he remain among the restless outlaws of the Gilead hills. Then he left them. And Jeshua their captain—the people's "Paschal boon" of those tragic feast days at Jerusalem—that son of Abbas who had witnessed the valor of this adventurer within the amphitheatre at Cæsarea and knew of his bravery at Gamala, said sadly: "There goeth a true son of that changeful clan of Issachar—yesterday a hero; to-day a craven." How blind indeed is man. As if the going back to uncongenial duties and a hum-drum life is not sometimes the height of valor, the crown of heroism!

Not as before was this new home-coming made. Not with the strangling rope about his neck, nor with the bloody marks of Herod's cruel sport upon his battered body and his ragged tunic was he flung before his mother's door; but, foot-sore and weary, heart-sore and soul-tired, torn with a conscience-stab deeper than the dagger-thrust of a Herod, throttled with a remorse more unyielding in its clutch than the tightly-drawn noose of human tormentors.

Thus, in the early morning hours, did he sink down, fearing yet desiring, penitent yet doubting, upon the threshold of that little house upon the Potters' Street in Nain where dwelt the widow Miriam.

And there his mother found him. A look of startled surprise, of joyous recognition drove the sorrow from her face. "Cheliel, my son!" she cried; and then, raising him up, she "fell upon his neck and kissed him."

Oh, the depth and tenderness—Oh, the divine eternity

of a mother's love! The same in the wilds of savagery as in the homes of culture, as supreme in the Palestine, the Rome, the Egypt of an ancient time as in the modern cities of these latter days. It lives among the hardships of the lowliest. It redeems from utter selfishness the luxuries of the highest. Patient, forgiving, perennial; trusting where all others disbelieve; excusing where all others censure; hoping where all others lose patience—there is nothing higher beneath the sun, nothing that can pierce deeper through the clogging mire of neglect, brutality, and crime. Who that remembers a mother does not recall that mother's never-faltering love? Who that has experienced trouble and drunk deep of disappointment does not yet hold fast to the blessed memory of that one earthly mercy-seat where he could always find comfort, rest, and peace? "A mother's love is best of all," still runs the saying in benighted Africa. "A mother's love will draw up from the depths of the sea," declare noble and peasant in progressive Russia. "Mother's love is ever in its spring," cries the courtly and pleasure-loving Frenchman; and the English poet has but voiced the faith of all sorts and conditions of men when he sings:

> "A mother is a mother still
> The holiest thing alive."

And thus it was that Cheliel Bar-Asha, hoping only for forgiveness, found welcome; thus he found rest; thus he came unto his own again and found trust and peace.

Little by little the mother drew his story out, explaining where he could not explain, excusing where he would not excuse.

"The blood of kings and heroes lives on forever, my Cheliel," she said, "even though generations of poverty and of humble ways seem to wash it all away. You could be but as you are. Your father's race has ever been thus—uncertain of faith, wavering of heart, compounded of noblest heroism and of shortest sight, content to yield when striving might succeed. You are a son of Issachar. Let that suffice to requite you for what you now do mourn as wasted opportunities and as changing faith. Only the Lord himself whose word brought you back to life can fix your wayward nature firmly to a certain aim and hold you to that faith unfaltering and unmoved."

"The Lord, my mother? Messias?" Bar-Asha said. "Alas, how shall that be? How shall he help me now? That dream is over. Messias is dead."

"Dead!" echoed the low-voiced Miriam. "Nay, not so, my son. The King doth live; doth live, I say. He hath been seen of men. His promise is fulfilled. He is risen indeed!"

Bar-Asha's surprise flamed into wonder and amaze. "Who tells you this?" he asked.

"She who has proved herself my comforter and friend," his mother replied. "The daughter of that good merchant of Chorazin, whom men call Jair the Just."

"Adah?" the hot flush of shame rushed into Bar-Asha's face. What new coil of woman's vengeance could these visits mean?

"Ay, even she. Listen, my son. There was a time, and that not long ago, when hope burned low within me and even faith seemed weak. Of you I could gain no

tidings. I knew not whether you were alive or dead. The pressure of want fell upon me, and life was sore indeed. The Messias, from whose coming I had hoped so much, was but a wanderer and an outcast, hiding in caves like the robbers of the hills, or fleeing before those who should have taken to their hearts his precepts and his truths. And then, when, as I have said, hope burned the lowest and even faith seemed weak, there came to me one day, seeking me out, even here in Nain, a fair young maiden, whose girlish face, marked as with a great sorrow, yet showed trust and goodness, gentleness and love. '*Shalom!* Miriam the widow of Tola,' she greeted me; 'peace to the mother of the son of Asha!' Wondering, I questioned, and questioning I learned the truth. O Cheliel, son of mine! You have cast away a pearl. You have lost a treasure greater than that hidden beneath Gerizim's crest. Among all the maidens of Israel there is none of lovelier soul, of loftier heart, of gentler life, of deeper faith and trust than is Adah, the daughter of Jair."

"Confront me not with my curse, O mother mine!" Bar-Asha cried. "None know this better than do I. And yet, as nothing is more unforgiving or relentless than a good woman turned to scorn, so can there be neither forgetfulness nor forgiveness toward me in Adah's noble heart."

"Nay, son, I think not so," the mother said with warmth. "There is neither bitterness nor scorn toward you in Adah's gentle heart. Never a word of your cruel treatment has she told to me. And though she may not forget, she can, I know, forgive. To me none has been kinder or more helpful. She has come, again and yet

again, with words of comfort on her lips, bearing help and strengthening in her hands. And, believing, as I have seen none other believe more strongly, in the mission and the triumph of Messias even when despair was deepest and the cross on Calvary bore its choicest flower, she has repeated to me his words of prophecy and peace and has told me also of his wondrous reappearing. She has spoken with those—women, like her, believers in Messias—who have really seen the risen Lord within these four days past."

"Then must I seek him out," Bar-Asha straight declared. "Now, if he lives again, must I sue for pardon and for grace. Would that I could hope from the woman I have wronged so certain and so sure an absolution as from the Man Divine whom I reviled and helped to slay."

A light footstep fell upon the threshold without; a slight form darkened the doorway; a gentle voice fell upon the ears of the two who listened within the dimly lighted room.

"Peace to this house," it said. "*Shalom!* widow of Nain. May I enter?"

Out of the shadows hastened the widow Miriam with welcome on her lips. Back into the shadows fell the discomfited son, fearing to face the woman he had so foully wronged.

"This house and all within it are yours, O daughter of Jair," the widow of Tola, with true Oriental courtesy, declared. "What tidings bring you from the world without? What from the risen Lord?"

"He who gave your son back to you and life will surely guide his wandering steps here to his mother's

door, O friend," the girl made answer. "I have begged my father to inquire and seek out the lost one, and he, so have I come to tell you, hath this day sent word to Jerusalem and to the east and west, asking that such as may, in any place, find the son of Asha, shall beg and bid him come again to those who love and who fain would succor him."

"And are you of these, O maiden?" the mother asked.

The silent form within the shadows waited in still deeper silence for the reply that, he felt assured, would breathe but scorn and pitiless resentment. And the answer came without an instant's hesitation.

"And why not, my mother? Is there any one so sad or sorry, so comfortless and sick at heart, to whom the Master would not be friend and helper? And shall I, who am but a simple follower of the Lord, be less desirous of helping than is he? Did he not add a new commandment to the ten proclaimed unto us of old by Moses the Law-giver, even this: 'That ye love one another?' 'By this,' he said, 'shall all men know that ye are my disciples.' And shall I who, by the Master's words, am bidden to love even my enemies, if such I have, deny my loving aid to Cheliel—who can never be an enemy of mine?"

There is a sudden stir in the darkened corner; out of the gloom springs the shadowy outline of a man. Adah, with a little catching of the breath, would have escaped through the open doorway, but that the arms of the widow of Tola stayed and supported her With hands outstretched as if in supplication and with pleading eyes the man steps within the beam of light that falls across the entrance way into that windowless room.

"Adah," he cried; "daughter of that Jair who was my benefactor and my friend; O maiden, whom I have wronged, but whom I ever have most dearly loved, pardon and forgive me! See, Adah; I have come to my home a ruined, sin-burdened but repentant man. The pride that puffed me up is pierced and fallen like the bubble that it was. The power I strove for has proved a mockery and a sham. And I who treated you with scorn, I who, blinded by avarice, saw not the wealth of your gentle soul, I who but spurned you as I did spurn and shout against the Master I had sworn to serve—see, I am rightfully requited. Proscribed of man, chastised of Heaven, scorned by the only maiden I did ever truly love, attainted by my own never-resting conscience, truly, my punishment is greater than I can bear. O pity and pardon me. I, who have loved you ever, sue now but for your forgiveness, for your pity and compassion."

Softly the girl put away the enfolding arms of the mother of him who thus pleaded for pardon. Slowly she approached this man who had spurned and scorned her. Gently, lovingly even, she held toward him both her open hands.

"Who am I to withhold pity or pardon from any who has sorrowed or has sinned?" she said. "Forgiveness comes from those whose hearts from being hardened are turned again by words of penitence. Son of Asha, my heart was never hardened against you."

"What!" Bar-Asha cried. "You do forgive me?"

For answer she simply looked at him. But, ah, what a look may tell! Then—"Cheliel," she said.

He caught her in his arms. He rained upon cheek and eyes and lips all the ardor and love that a man of fervid temper can throw into a kiss.

"Cheliel," she said again; "my heart has ever been yours. You do but take what is your own of right." And with a flush upon her face that told of the heart-happiness that shone through her dark and tender eyes, the daughter of Jair looked up with confidence and trust into the eyes of the man she loved.

> "Of all the paths that lead to woman's love
> Pity 's the straightest."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"HIS EYES WERE OPENED."

SUPREMELY happy in their reunited lives and all-absorbing love, Cheliel and Adah passed three blissful days within the little house at Nain. And then the maiden said :

"Is it not wise, my Cheliel, to seek my father out and at our home in Chorazin make him sharer in our joy?"

"Think you he will welcome me ; think you he will be a willing sharer in our joy?" the son of Asha asked. "I am but a broken man, O Adah. I can bring him as a dower-gift for you little better than a lack of fortune and a wasted life. Will he not rather bid me begone, and, denied your hand, seek elsewhere for the happiness your word has brought to me?"

But Adah knew her father's noble nature. "Nay ; he is just and good, O Cheliel," she replied. "None go empty-handed from our door. Shall he, who would not deny the poor and sorrowing, cast thus aside his only daughter's heart? He, if he would, might say, even as did Zaccai of Jericho to Messias : 'The half of my goods I give unto the poor, and if I have taken aught of any man wrongfully, I restore it fourfold.' Would such as he think of dower-gifts, or deem the lack of riches a bar when his only daughter's happiness depended upon his consent?"

So, with a mother's blessing resting upon them both, the two lovers set out for Chorazin. And there, even as Adah had promised, the generous merchant whom men called Jair the Just welcomed and blessed them both, seeing in his daughter's happy face and in Bar-Asha's look of pride the prophecies of a future of love, of mutual concession, and of perfect trust.

And when Bar-Asha spoke of his ruined hopes and of his lack of worldly goods, the noble merchant said: "We may not change the customs of our people, O my son; for that which hath been done by our fathers since Moses gave the Law hath grown into our natures and our lives. I have learned to hold the wiser precepts of the Master of men—He whom Moses' Law and our nation's blinding hate alike have slain on Calvary—as more than ancient custom, higher than the outgrown Law. But that we may not seem to wander from the olden ways, see—here will I stand to you who are friendless, even as the 'friend of the bridegroom.' Even as our Father Abraham sent his friend Eliezer to find for him a bride, even as Judah did select a bride for Er, so will I be both father and friend to you."

And, taking the blushing but blissful Adah by the hand, he delivered her over to the man of her choice. "The Lord of Hosts give you a prosperous life, my children," the father said, and joined their ready hands that lingered long in that espousal clasp.

Then said Jair again: "*Mohar* and *mattan*, dower and gift, O son, I will not ask from you. Your love to my daughter shall be the choicest *mohar;* your loyalty and trust the most acceptable *mattan*. And with the *ketubah* that we shall sign in token of the sealing of this marriage

contract will I give—to you as friend, to her as father—one half my store of money and of goods that I have accumulated as a merchant here in Chorazin."

Then, with his own hand, he placed upon his daughter's finger the *kiddushin* or ring of betrothal, and said to the son of Asha : "See, my Cheliel, thus do I set apart my daughter for your wife. Behold ! I do commit her to you as a special trust ; wherefore, I beseech you, do not entreat her evil."

And Bar-Asha answered, with a look of pride : "Even as you have done for me, my father, out of your own love and faith, this great and generous deed, so will I requite you ; faithful and loving will I be to this dear girl whom you have given me, loyal to you, her father and my friend. Jair the Just, as men do wisely call you, this day hath made a man of me indeed."

Although the custom of their people would have made for those who were betrothed, the year of espousal a year of separation, the freedom of action that had already come as one of the first-fruits of that freedom of thought embodied in the new religion of Messias kept these two together and led them out into the world of men.

Together they walked the busy streets of Chorazin and of Capernaum, of Bethsaida and of Magdala—then the centre of the life and action of the most densely populated section of all Palestine. Together they trod the pebbly beaches that circled the Galilean lake, or watched the sunset light that tipped the western slopes with glory and touched the broken basalt cliffs along the eastern shore until those forbidding precipices seemed transfigured into gateways into paradise by the golden tints and purple shadows of descending day.

Again, mounted upon her own gentle *athon*—the she-ass used for riding by the well-to-do women of Palestine—she would journey southward toward Nain, while Cheliel held the bridle rein and led the beast along. And there they would cheer the widow Miriam with their presence and their loving offices, albeit that good mother could scarcely accept with entire satisfaction this daring innovation of companionship, practised by an "engaged" couple.

It was on one of these frequent journeys to Nain in about the middle of the month Zif—the beautiful "month of the blossom"—the Syrian May—that these two leisurely made their way along the winding road that, skirting the base of Mount Tabor, led on to Nain and the villages of the Esdraelon plain. The woods that lay at the foot of this most beautiful of Galilean hills were almost park-like in their disposal and foliage. The air was vocal with the song of birds, and through the rifts of green the swelling slope of Tabor, clothed in verdure and spangled with flowers innumerable, rose fully a thousand feet above the billowy plain.

The beauty of the day, the peacefulness of the woodland shade fell on them like a spell. Not desiring to go out into the unbroken sunlight that lay hot and full upon the treeless road beyond this stretch of forest, the travellers turned aside, and, while Adah kept her seat, Cheliel, seeking a resting-place among the secluded terraces that dotted Tabor's slope, followed one of the seldom used pathways that climbed the mountain side, and along this trail led on the plodding ass, fetlock deep in flowers.

"The world is fair indeed, my Cheliel," the happy

Adah said; "and life is sweet and pleasant. Think, oh think, dear heart, how all that did seem to you but cross and curse in the days that now are dead have turned to richest blessing. The Herod-stab that sent you down to death was but the entrance to a Heaven-given life; the lingering and losing that your years have known, the hopes that rose only to fall, the frenzies of defeat and of despair were but as furnace fires that cleansed your soul anew. The changefulness and wavering that now seem to you but childish did but bring you to a more manful and heroic life. Not all your trials in Herod's marble palace, not all your struggles with the lions of Cæsarea, not all your life with her whom, even now, I can think of in pity and in love,—not all these, O son of Asha, have been amiss. For have they not brought you strengthening and faith; have they not awakened you to a higher purpose and a nobler endeavor; have they not—O Cheliel, my own!—brought you unto me?"

Oh glorified selfishness of woman's love! Sinner or saint, high or low, bond or free, the maiden of the olden time, the gracious lady of our modern days—wherever a woman lives to love, this supremacy of self that guides her heart and divests of all ungenerousness the very egotism that makes her new-found world so beautiful, is strung to the same measure, tuned to the same key: "All this has led to me!"

But in Adah's soul other things beside the flame of a requited love burned pure and high.

"Cheliel," she said, as through the rifts of green a stream of sunshine flooded all the place, "after the sunset comes the night. Hope fades and glory dies. Our lives too must some day end, for surely he who gave us

life anew did not give us deathlessness. Tell me, then, are all the trials through which we have passed, are all the wondrous experiences we have known, simply to serve as guidance in our lives alone? Can we not do something too for our brethren? The words Messias gave to those who followed him, 'Love one another,' should mean more to us who know the power of his voice and touch than simply as for our two lives alone. What can we do? What—O Cheliel—what can we do for Messias now?"

"Nay, what indeed," Bar-Asha slowly said. "Messias is dead. His unselfish life is with us as but a gracious memory—a guide to better living, a help to nobler doing. But he is dead. Despite the love-engendered visions of those who declare that they have seen the Lord once again alive, Messias is dead. Such as he come not again to life. And this, to me, his greatest precept seems: 'O man! you who thought to win by my name and by my arm place, fortune, rank, and power, know you this—there is something loftier than patriotism, something nobler than freeing a nation from the oppressor's heel. The world is full of love. Oh, seek to give it life. Country is not everything; man is more than the citizen!'"

"There spoke the wiser man," Adah responded. "But oh, dear heart of mine, how can one hold his truth if that which he did so clearly prophesy cometh not to pass? 'I shall come again,' he said; and to the weeping sister of Eleazar of Bethany, so it hath been told to me, he did declare: 'He that believeth on me, though he have died, shall live, and he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die.' See, now; we that have died do live and do believe, and shall we never die? Where is the truth, O Cheliel?"

"Adah," Bar-Asha thoughtfully replied, "know you not that saying of our rabbis: 'Teach thy tongue to say I do not know'? I that have died and live; I that, believing, followed after only to lose him whom I had followed; now, as the dream is over, can but say: I do not know! How can we live forever? How can Messias, who gave life to others, bring himself to life? It may not be. We must but love his memory, honor his name, live as he did bid us, for the helping of our neighbor, for the bettering of man. And that is all."

Ah, was it all? For see; what sign is this that falls upon their wondering eyes? Their path had led them quite to the edge of one of the natural esplanades that, embowered in foliage, terraced the northwesterly slope of Tabor, quite out of sound and sight of the Roman fortress on its crest. Here, high above the world, they came suddenly upon a considerable company of men and women, gathered as if for worship and for offering. What! was Adah's first thought, do the pagan Gentiles of the towns below seek to repeat in Tabor's groves the sacrifices to their hateful gods as once was here their wont?

But Bar-Asha started in even more amazement. For among this assembled company he recognized certain of those whom he had once known as the closest followers of Messias. And as his eye fell upon the central figure of the group—a noble figure clothed in purest white—he laid a trembling hand upon his companion's arm. "Look, O look!" he cried. "Know you him who talketh with them here? Adah, it is—it is Messias' self! It is the risen Lord!"

Down to their knees they dropped in deepest rever-

ence. And the son of Asha, who had once declared that if this wondrous thing should ever happen he would sue for pardon and for grace, scarce dared to lift his eyes to that Presence whose mortal agonies he had beheld upon the cross.

And now upon their listening ears, these words immortal fell: "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel unto every creature, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end!"

Dazed and wonder-filled, long thus they knelt with bowed and reverent heads. And when they looked up again, behold! they were alone. Master and company alike had disappeared. But the words of solemn message still rang in their ears. The sun streaming through the rifted foliage lay like a benediction upon the spot where they had seen the Lord. The glory was with them yet.

Then Adah said, simply: "It was the Lord! Now do you believe, my Cheliel?"

And Cheliel answered: "I believe! O Adah, we are blessed indeed. Now have my eyes been opened; now do I see my duty; now is my mission clear. I will follow the Lord, and if he but give me strength I will spread abroad his glory and his saving grace. His mission comes not to the Jew alone, O Adah, but to all the world. He is King of men! Come, let us go hence."

Like a Heaven-granted blessing upon their vows to nobler living and to helpful deeds had come this vision of their risen Master. Before the year was out, by *peer* and *tsaiph*, by *kishshurim* and *callah*, and by all the curi-

ous customs and the festival adornments of the wedding-feasts of old they two were made one. And on that happy day, within the privacy of their own *chedar* or marriage chamber, after the guests were gone and the good Jair had spoken his words of final blessing, the husband and wife vowed their lives to love toward one another and to that higher service of him who, by his word, had brought them both from death unto life, and with his parting breath had said: "Lo! I am with you alway!"

EPILOGUE.

INTO HIS INHERITANCE.

Day dawned over the Holy City. From the watchers on the temple towers at Jerusalem came the sunrise-cry as the first beams of light touched the roofs of Hebron to the southeast, twenty miles away: "It is day at Hebron." And then outrang, loud and clear, the trumpet-call that proclaimed to all the sleeping city the coming of the day. Another instant and then, above the hills that "stand about Jerusalem," the morning broke in splendor, and tower and temple, gilded roof and palace and springing arch caught the flush of light and threw back, gleam for gleam, the glory of a newborn day.

Along the narrow streets and through the opening gates the tide of travel moved in a slowly growing stream, while into the five hundred synagogues of the awakened city pressed the throngs of worshippers, zealous to perform their prescribed obligations at the hour of *shacarith*, or morning prayer.

Still higher climbed the rising sun. The hum of traffic filled the crowded town. Buyers and sellers, idlers and strangers thronged the streets, elbowing one another in the narrow ways, bartering and chaffering, eager alike for bargain and for sale, now in the broad square

of the Xistus, now in the Upper Market, or now in the pillared Court of the Gentiles, that circled the great white temple on the sacred mount.

And into this wide encircling Court of the Gentiles came yet others as the day advanced. For service or for sacrifice, for duty, business, gossip, or pleasure they came, and, as they thronged the narrow spaces where stood the thirteen *shoparoth* or money-chests, their gifts of mite and shekel clinked against the narrow necks of these chests of the "ram's horn," into which they were dropped.

The sharp counting of the money-changers at their little tables in the court grew monotonous, the bleating of lambs, the bellowing of cattle driven off to sacrifice, rose continuously and mingled with the buzz of conversation as, beneath the sculptured roof of the cloisters, Pharisee and Sadducee, doctor and scribe, citizen and visitor, walked in Solomon's Porch, deep in political argument or in dogmatic disputation.

There came a stir as of some unusual occurrence in the outer court, and through the restless crowd the tidings ran that the members of the grave Sanhedrim were on their way from their customary meeting-place by the Gate of Susa to the Hall of Hewn Stones—the *Lishcath hag-gazith*—within the sanctuary itself, where they seldom met save for some important matter.

"Why meet they there?" the inquiry came from watchers in the crowd; "the Stone Chamber is but seldom used since our Gentile tyrants have taken from the Sanhedrim the power of life and death."

"Trust me our accursed over-lords shall not have chance to take it from them to-day," the answer quickly

came. "They are to try a blasphemer; and not Roman nor Idumean shall dare to say them nay."

"A blasphemer! who is he?" passed from mouth to mouth.

"One of that pest of heresy-mongers, so it is said," was the reply, "that followed that dead Netser whom men called the Rabbi Jeshua—him they crucified on Calvary yonder some half-score years ago."

"So? 'T is a set possessed of Beelzebub," one listener angrily burst out. "They claim that this Netser was indeed Messias; they say that he rose from the dead, and that he will come again to vex and to destroy this city that so righteously did slay him."

"And yet they make many proselytes," another watcher said. "The sect is growing fast. 'T is time, indeed, that our elders should stop them in their way. Why, I have heard that there are now nigh eight thousand of these followers of the Netser throughout Israel."

"A dangerous sect, indeed," the first speaker responded. "It were well if such as this blasphemer who goeth before the Sanhedrim to-day should be made to die the death. I would willingly be of those among the witnesses who are to cast the stones, if it but help to break up the pestilent heresy he proclaims."

"Look yonder! There he goes!" and at once all eyes were turned toward the terrace where the steps led to the Beautiful Gate, and where, surrounded by the temple guards, the prisoner went on toward the Stone Chamber, within which waited the Sanhedrim.

The face and form the curious crowd now gazed upon were those of a man scarce thirty years of age—a form well-knit and manly, a face strong, sweet, and brave-

appearing in its unmoved, steadfast look. The clamorous crowd, the temple officials, even the solemn place itself seemed not to move or interest him. Undaunted in his purpose, firm of step, and strong of faith he walked onward to his trial.

Into the Stone Chamber he passed; and there he faced his judges—the vindictive Seventy, compounded of bigotry and superstition, of jealousy and craft, who made up the great Sanhedrim of Jerusalem. In a raised semicircle there they sat—the President of the Council in the centre, and, at either end, the clerks or secretaries, who were to take down the evidence and record the sentence.

"Your name?" the accused was asked. And, facing that stern semi-circle, determined on his death, the prisoner answered valiantly, fearlessly, simply: "I am called of my brethren Stephanus the deacon, a servant of the living Christ."

With a smothered exclamation of disgust the President of the Council turned toward the accusers: "Ye do deem this man guilty of blasphemy," he said. "Give now your testimony against him."

The lying catalogue of charge and accusation was recited glibly and well by those engaged thus to perjure themselves; but through it all Stephen stood erect and calm, almost unheeding their venomous words. His thoughts were elsewhere.

In memory his mind went back to that wondrous day, now nearly ten years past, when on the slope of Tabor his eyes had been opened to the meaning and mission of his risen Lord. He recalled his life of purpose and of effort since that day of awakening, his happy home with his

young wife in Chorazin, the growing faith in the Redeemer which had led them both and their honored father, Jair the merchant, to join the little community of the followers of Messias that had grown up in Israel. He saw himself honored and trusted among his brethren. He heard again the words which their leading spirit, Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, had spoken when his story had been told: "Even as the Master did give unto me a new name in consecration, so give we one to thee. Thou hast ever been Cheliel, 'son of a crown'; be now Stephanus, 'the crown' indeed. For out of much strife, through trial and through heat, hast thou come at last to the crown of duty, of obedience, and of faith." And so Cheliel, the son of Asha, became Stephen, the disciple of the Lord.

And with his new duties new powers had come to him. At that Pentecostal feast whereat the spirit had descended upon all those earnest, devoted servants of the Lord, the gift of speech had fallen upon the new Stephen, and he had become so eloquent an advocate for his Master, so the record tells us, that those who would have disputed with him "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake."

And as, standing there before the haughty council, the old, old life of trial and of failure fell away from his thoughts and the light of the new life of action, of effort, and of help upon which he had entered irradiated his soul, he thought of Adah, his loving, trusting wife through nigh ten years of happiness. In all his endeavors she had been his readiest helper; in his devotion to the Master she had been his closest associate and comrade. She had made their home a haven of peace

and rest ; she had been to him both blessing and inspiration. And as he thought of her, low in his heart, even in his danger, there thrilled the words of that song of King Lemuel in praise of the faithful wife :

" Her price is above rubies.
The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,
So that he shall have no need of spoil.
She will do him good and not evil ;
She openeth her mouth with wisdom
And in her tongue is the law of kindness.
Many daughters have done virtuously,
But thou excellest them all !
Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain :
But a woman that feareth the Lord—she shall be praised."

He heard nothing of the lying accusations ; he cared nothing for the falsehoods of those perjured witnesses ; he thought but little of the angry looks cast upon him by those so-called judges in Israel. He thought of Adah. And, thinking of her, his eyes saw again that wondrous scene on Tabor's slope, when, together, he and she, kneeling in reverent faith, had gazed yet once again upon the face of their risen Lord and heard those words of glorious assurance : " Lo ! I am with you alway—even unto the end." The Master was with him here as at the gate of Nain, here as on the verdant slopes of Tabor, and a look of contentment, of love, and peace came over his face so that it shone almost as with a grace divine, and " all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

The words of accusal ceased. And the President of the council asked sternly : " What answer make you ? Are these things so ? "

Then Stephen spoke. So loftily, so eloquently, so practically did he speak, tracing, as the opening of his defence, the story of the people of Israel in the days that were gone, that every Jew who listened grew proud of his nation and his land. But suddenly, in the very swing of his brilliant retrospect, he turned upon his judges and accusers, and with a burning directness—to which now they saw his prelude had but logically led—he burst forth:

"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and in years! Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye! Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted! And they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the Law by the ministry of angels and have not kept it."

Stunned for an instant by this unexpected arraignment, then their rage burst forth. Every man in the council sprang to his feet. In wrath almost too great for words they screamed and howled at him—those seventy sedate and dignified judges—the enthroned Law of Israel! "Down with the blasphemer!" they cried. "Drag him forth! Stone him; stone him to the death!"

But their rage moved him not a whit. He had turned the tables on his accusers. The judges had been judged. He had avenged his Lord. Into the very teeth of their false accusations and falser judgments had he flung his gage. He had confronted them with their own crime.

Even as to-day these raged against him so had he clamored against that Holy One, for whom now he was

ready to die. Oh, would not he against whom, in that terrible time long past he had so raged and clamored, now receive this sacrifice of his life? Away back, on that day when first, by the Wells of Harod, he had heard of Messias, the word had come to him: "The Master hath need of you!" And now for ten busy years his life had been the Lord's. Would the Master now receive again, what, at the gate of Nain, he had given back to him in trust?

He looked up in perfect confidence, in serenest faith; and there, above the angrily surging heads, above the brandished arms of the council, above the marble ceiling of the Hall of Stones, he seemed to catch a glorious vision of welcome and forgiveness. The light of a holy joy broke upon his face; lifting his hands to heaven he cried, with all the intensity of belief in his voice: "Behold! I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!"

His forgiveness was complete. His peace was perfect. Come death or torture now, his soul was satisfied. Messias, the Lord himself, rising from his glorious throne, had stretched out to him—Cheliel, the waverer of old, Stephen, the steadfast follower of to-day—his open hand in call, in welcome, and in forgiveness.

But that cry of vision sealed his fate. As one man the council rose against him and, flinging aside dignity, justice, calmness, position, and pride, they fell upon him and dragged him from the hall screaming "*Ish maveth; ish maveth!* Death to the blasphemer!"

Across the surging Court of the Gentiles, where the excited people took up the cry, out through the open gate and over the Kedron bridge they hurried him, the

rabble following at their heels. On they pushed, and stopped not until they had flung him down upon the very edge of one of the rocky bluffs that rise above the ragged ravine of Jehoshaphat. In mad haste the throng of volunteering "witnesses" stripped from off their backs *talith* and *cetoneth* and laid them at the feet of one who was "consenting unto" the act—a young student of the law, "whose name was Saul." Clenched fists clutched the murderous stones; brawny arms, bared for the act, flung the death-dealing missiles straight at the living target. The brutal "justice" of those savage days of old was meted out in the yet more brutal punishment that fanaticism so often has visited upon faith. And there "they stoned Stephen."

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" he prayed in that same spirit of divine forgiveness that he had learned from his Master. And then—"he fell asleep."

> "He heeded not reviling tones,
> Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
> Though cursed and scorned, and bruised with stones.
>
> "But looking upward, full of grace,
> He prayed; and from a happy place,
> God's glory smote him on the face.

Cheliel, the adventurer, had become Stephen, the saint. He had received the crown of martyrdom. He had entered into his inheritance.

In the very heart of the great city of Vienna there stands to-day the splendid cathedral which for more than six hundred years has borne the name of St. Ste-

phen's. All about the city, down upon which the lofty tower of St. Stephen's looks, have raged again and again the foemen of the state. Christian and Muzlim have thundered at its gates ; to it have come changes of rulers, changes of faith, changes of customs and of life—typical all of that continual change that is the heritage of man. And still the old cathedral stands, defying change, an heirloom of the ages ; a monument to the faith, the valor, and the constancy of him whom this great Austrian capital has shrined for ages as its patron saint—Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church.

"New occasions bring new duties," the poet tells us, and it was the duty of Stephen to be the first to discern and proclaim the world-wide mission of the Christ. "If a Stephen had not knelt in prayer, the Church would not have had a Paul," St. Augustine declared.

But we who have followed this story of one who fought the fight against self and conquered grandly, while glorifying the martyr think also of the man, and see in him before whose shrine pilgrims for ages have bent in reverence, that same manly, though wavering soul, who, in the fair Syrian land, nineteen centuries ago, was known as Cheliel Bar-Asha, a son of the clan of Issachar.

THE END.

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